

A New Beginning Redone

by jenjentheboscstick

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Summary: Hey, this is the sequel to Time for Control, it is about the girl's lives through college until college graduation, and raising their children. This story is officially complete! Thank you for reading!

1. The Normal life

A/N okay so here's the first chapter of the sequel to my first story "time for control", I hope you like it, and please review, they make me smile thanks

A New Beginning

Chapter 1: The Normal Life

It's been almost a month since the four mermaids were summoned to the mermaid world, and granted the right to keep their tails, and only their boyfriends know about it. They have been going about their business as usual.

Rikki took over as partner and manager of the café, and Emma and Ash both started working there again. Bella and Emma found a cute little apartment with three bedrooms, a small kitchen, and a decent sized living room. The two had decided that their babies could share a room since they wouldn't be living together forever, probably just until the end of their college years. Cleo and Lewis had found a small little cottage right by the beach, it has four bedrooms, a medium sized kitchen, and a comfortable living room. Ash had gotten the apartment right above Bella and Emma's only smaller. Will, of course, still had his boat shack. Rikki and Zane had gotten a three flat. The upstairs had four bedrooms: the master with a juzzi sized bath, the bottom floor had a large kitchen, living room, and an office with a side room that had all sorts of games, and in their basement, which had no windows, contained an inground pool, that is 10 feet deep, 10 feet wide, and 20 feet long.

Rikki was in shock when they first went through it; Harrison and Terry, but mostly Harrison, had donated money towards the house that overlooked the ocean because they wanted the best for their grandchild. The house was located just 10 minutes down the road from Cleo and Lewis's home, and Emma and Bella's apartment was in the middle, and a little in land.

****Rikki's POV****

All of us are starting college tomorrow, and each of us girls have our doctor's appointments today. I already had my appointment, I found out that I am about two and a half months pregnant. Zane and I have just finished moving into our new place. Now that the moon pool is active again, I told the girls that we can do full moons in our basement.

I am meeting the girls at the cafÃ© soon, so I should get going. I was on my way to the cafÃ©, I see Charlotte. I know she's not a threat anymore, but I can't help, but wonder what could have been different. What if she was our friend instead of our enemy or if she never went after Lewis or even if she never got suspicious of us? Would it have worked out? Like could five mermaids work if we were all friends first?

I kind of feel bad for her, she lost her tail twice now, and tough she doesn't remember I can't help, but wonder how that would feel?

Thinking about how different things are now is strange. Like even with Denmen floating around, we have no worries. I'm so glad that Miriam, and Sophie don't know about us being mermaids. I can't believe they are so jealous they would lock us up. Well, here I am. There's Emma and Bella, I wonder Cleo is.

"Hey, girls, where's Cleo?" I say.

"What? You're not happy with just us?" Bella say laughing.

"Oh, you know I love you guys, I just wanted to know where Cleo was," I say. I then take a seat next to Bella, just as Cleo walks in.

"Hey girls," Cleo says as she sits next to Emma.

"Hey, so how was the doctors?" Emma asks.

"Well, I am about 6 weeks pregnant," Cleo says.

"I am only one week more pregnant then you, Cleo, about 7 weeks," Bella says.

"I am 10 weeks along, or 2 and half months," I say.

"I am only just above you in the time line, only closer to 3 months, which is almost the end of the first trimester," Emma says.

"Wow, seems like you guys were in sync with each other, and started it all," Cleo says.

"I guess , at least there will be about a month before there will be

two babies in our apartment," Emma says.

"That's good, so college starts tomorrow, what are you guys studying?" I ask.

"Marine biology is an obvious one for me, but I'm also going to do dolphin training. Lewis is going to be a scientist, but I think we all knew that. What about you, Rikki?" Cleo asks.

"Well, naturally business studies for both me and Zane, but I also want to do some writing, maybe even true crime," I say.

"You want to be a writer?" Emma asks.

"Well, yah, I like writing and after those criminals kept me locked upon my birthday, I feel like their stories need to be read," I say.

"Wow, that's cool," Bella says.

"So, what do you want to be , Bella," Emma asks.

"Obviously, I want to sing, but I'm thinking that maybe I should teach music to the young kids, I'm not sure yet. Will, however, doesn't have a clue on what he wants to do," Bella says.

"Well, he can take the basics until he finds his destination. What about you, Emma?" I ask.

"I'm not sure. I like business, which is Ash's study, but I would love to educate young minds. I just do know in what?" Emma says.

"What about English/ writing, and is Ash going to have his own stable or what?" I ask.

"I don't know, I'm thinking we can have an gallery with all sorts or art, and then he could have his stable too. Like I'll own an art studio, and he'll own a stable," Emma says.

"So, like business studies, and English maybe?" Cleo asks.

"Maybe, so anyways," Emma says.

"Everything is so weird now, like with knowing what Charlotteand them really wanted to do to us," I say.

"I know it makes you wonder," Bella says.

"Oh, speaking of, Lewis has all of Denmen's research, and he's planning on getting Max's research again to compare the two. Do you guys want to learn more about us?" Cleo asks.

"Yes, I'd love to learn more," I say.

"First though I have to go to work, so meet at Mako at 6?" Cleo asks.

We all agreed, and then Emma and I went to work, while Cleo left for the marine park. I wonder what we will learn from all that

research.

2. Research

Chapter 2: Research

****No POV****

****At the cafÃ©****

Rikki had gone into the office to do some of the bills, and Emma was working the floor. Bella had just started rehearsing when she noticed Sophie walk in.

Sophie may not be a threat to the mermaid secret, but she still had it out for Rikki and Bella. She walked up to the counter, and asked for Zane.

"Zane isn't here at the moment, why do you want him?" Emma asks.
"Besides, I'm sure Rikki wouldn't want you to see him."

"Well, it's not Rikki's decision, and I'm pretty sure Zane has a mind of his own," Sophie says.

"Well, last time I checked you were banned from here," Emma says.

"Last time I checked you're not the boss," Sophie says then stalks out.

Just after Sophie leaves, Rikki comes out and asks what happened.

"Oh, Sophie wanted to talk to Zane," Emma says.

"She's not still trying to be with him, is she?" Bella asks.

"She better not be, next time she comes in send her in to me," Rikki says.

They all go back to work. Soon thereafter Cleo comes in for a juice and Bella joins her.

"Hey, Bells, What's up?"

"Oh, nothing. How's the wedding planning going?" Bella asks.

"It's going great, I just wish I wasn't going to be so pregnant when it happens," Cleo says.

"Yah, that kinda bites. At least everything is going well for you and Lewis," Bella says.

"Yup, and school starts tomorrow, hey you want to go for a swim a little early?" Cleo asks.

"Yes, let's go."

****Bella and Cleo****

Swimming along, enjoying the water, thinking nothing could go wrongâ€¦

Rikki and Emma

Rikki comes out of the office to ask Emma, "Is Denmen still floating around?"

"I think so, why?" Emma asks.

"Well, I was just thinking that she can very well see us again. The queen can't stop her from putting up cameras for her job," Rikki says.

"We would know by now though," Emma says.

"Unless for some reason she doesn't know about us, like who we are," Rikki says.

"I seriously doubt that she knows, or that we would be faced with this so soon again. I mean we even took her research how would she know," Emma says.

"I guess, I still feel weird about the fact that people knew, and now it's like we've gone back in time," Rikki says.

Zane walks in for his shift, and walks over to Emma and Rikki. "Hey love, are he accounts done?"

"Yes, and actually Emma and I are meeting the girls and Lewis at the moon pool soon to go through Max's, Lewis's and Denmen's research on mermaids."

"Are you going right now?" Zane asks.

"Yes, I think I saw Cleo and Bella already head that way," Emma says.

"Oh, are Ash and Will going to be involved?" Zane asks.

"I don't think so, why?" Rikki asks.

"Well, because I want to be more involved, remember? And if they are going to be there I don't want to be the only one left out," Zane says.

"Aww it's okay, I think it's just us, and I really need you here," Rikki says.

"Alright, then talk to you later," Zane says.

"Byes," Rikki says. Then her and Emma leave the building and Sophie, who's just waiting outside in hiding, decides she'll go in after Emma and Rikki are out of sight.

****Cleo and Bella****

After a nice swim around the reefs, they head into the moon pool.

"Oh, it's so nice to relax, and have no worries. Do you think we should tell our parents, again?" Cleo asks.

"Well, after last time I'm definitely not telling them. I mean they still kicked me out because of the baby, but even so their reaction was just bad, and because the world doesn't know anymore; they would just try to lock me up. They can't know," Bella says.

"I'm sorry. I mean that really sucks, and I'm just afraid that if Kim knowsâ€|and the world doesn't then she'll throw me under the bus, kind of. Like use it as a blackmail for the rest of my life," Cleo says.

"Aw well maybe it would be best to just tell your dad, he is understanding," Bella says.

"I guess, but their reactions could be different because the world doesn't know," Cleo says.

"Yah, but we know our babies will be mermaids so it's like there's a good chance they'll find out accidentally so mine as well tell them," Bella says.

"Does that mean you're going to tell yours?" Cleo asks.

"No, I'll just have to figure out a way to keep it hidden. My situation is different than yours," Bella says.

"This is true," Cleo says.

They sit in silence, waiting on Lewis, Emma, and Rikki.

****Rikki and Emma****

They dove into the water at their secret spot. They had agreed to race to Mako. As they were racing they went much faster than usual, and this time Rikki won.

They popped up in the moon pool, and saw that Cleo and Bella were drying off on the sand, and Lewis was spreading out the research.

"Hey guys, not starting without us, are you?" Emma asks.

"Nah, just setting up the info," Lewis replies.

Rikki and Emma pull themselves out of the water. Rikki dries them off, and they all gather around the research.

"Okay, so based on my research only certain liquids will change you, and your children will be mermaids and Based on Denmen's research even if you have boys they will be mermen. From both mine and Max's research there is no way to reverse the effects of being mermaids, except when the moon chooses too. All the research proves that based on DNA everything shows that you re more fish than human. A doctor would know right away. Also the longer you are mermaids, the more quickly you will gain more powers, that is why Bella can jellify and cure the water. Based on genes, your children will have your powers, and say you get a new power in between your first and second child,

then second would get the new power also," Lewis says.

"So, what about our tails changing colors," Rikki asks.

"As far as I can tell it's because you are pregnant because if you notice yours, and Emma's tails are the furthest along, just like in your pregnancies," Lewis says.

"So, will they stay changed once the pregnancies are over?" Emma asks.

"As far as I know yes, but we will have to wait until one of you has your baby," Lewis says.

"So, what else did we learn," Bella asks.

"Quite a lot like how each of your tail are custom fit to your bodies," Lewis says. "Or even how your powers are destined for you."

"Destined for us?" Cleo asks.

"Yes, there was a reason that you all got the specific power you received, it just doesn't say why that is," Lewis replies.

"Wow, well is there anything else?" Rikki asks.

"Well, there is just the basic information, most of which we have found out over the years, nothing really worth mentioningâ€|"

'Wait before we go onâ€|Denmen is still around, and just because she does not know about us doesn't mean she won't be doing "Fish counts" like before, maybe we should check for cameras every once in a while" Emma says.

"That's a good idea, let's hope there weren't any when we came in hereâ€|" Cleo says.

3. New Problems

A/N hey guys, sorry for the wait, and don't worry I promise that the story will be more clear and easier to follow but not a complete change, so please keep reading and reviewing, and I'll update sooner

P.s. sorry it's short, I'll make it up to you if you review

Chapter 3: New Problems

****No POV****

For the next few weeks the boys would dive down and check for cameras to fins that there were none until about a month later.

****Rikki's POV****

I decided to go for a swim after work by myself. I went slowly because I had no reason to sprint since I wasn't racing anyone and there weren't any emergency meetings, yet. So, as I glide through the

water, I start to think about what Zane told meâ€|

****Flashback****

"Rikki, I have something to tell youâ€|" Zane starts.

"What is it," I ask eyes narrowing.

"Sophie came here while you guys were going over the research at Mako," he says.

"Andâ€|." I say.

"She came on to me, I push her off, and sent her on her way, but she came back yesterday and tried again. I just wanted to tell you because she's not planning on stoppingâ€|"

"She will give up eventually, just ignore her and make sure the staff know she's not welcome," I reply.

****Present****

For some reason I was way more calmer than I should have been, after all she is the reason we broke up before. I guess I just wasn't surprised that she would do that. As I arrive at the moon pool, I debate about whether I should get out or not when I hear splashes behind me. I turn around to see Julia from the mermaid world.

Before I could even stumble out a "What?" she starts talking extremely fast.

"there's trouble in the mermaid word. More and more mermaids decided o come live near the surface, and the queen and Jessica decided to come visit you guys, but there was a problemâ€|the marine biologist friend of yours caught them with some cameras. We need your help to get them back before someone else decides to take over," she says in a rush.

All I really got out of all that was that there was trouble that had to do with cameras and Denmen. So, I say, "What can I do? Besides, I thought he had all these magnificent powers, shouldn't she be able to get herself out, and why did they want to visit us anyways?"

"It's a long story, please they need your help along with the other girlsâ€|just tell me you'll help them," Julia says pleasingly.

I pause before I answer. I can't speak for them, but I don't think they will. Why would we walk into that after the last time? In truth, if it was Emma, Bella, or Cleo, I would do it in a heartbeat, but we barely know the queen or Jessica. Why come to us when there are so many others?

"Why us? What about the hundreds of other mermaids?" I ask instead of giving my answer.

"She needs you girls, and you know the doctor, you would be more knowledgable about everythingâ€|" she replies trailing off.

"I'll talk to the girls, but I can't promise anything," I say before

turning around and heading under water, and back to the café.

****An hour later****

I walk into the café to see Emma and Bella sitting in a booth and looking through a baby magazine. I head over and quickly spot Cleo coming over as well. As Cleo and I sit down, I skip the usual greetings to tell them about Julia's visit. As I predicted their response was why?

"Why should we help them?" Bella asks incredulously.

"Why come to us?" asks Cleo.

"Why walk into that trap?" Emma asks.

They were all the same ones I thought of, and I quickly answer them.

We then sat and talked about it, giving the idea that we might be able to concoct a plan.

"Maybe it was our fault," I say.

"How so?" Emma asks.

"It could be that we weren't careful enough," I state maybe we could help them if I guilt the girls into it.

"This isn't our fault, and you know it," Bella says.

Before I can respond, Cleo jumps in, "We can't risk our babies."

I couldn't argue there so I say, "I guess you're right. I gotta go break the news to Julia."

"Don't bother, I knew you'd come here and I shoulda known not to come to you," a voice behind me says.

I turn around to see Julia, angry and upset that she was "alone" in this.

"And to think she helped you from the very beginning, and now you turn on her," Julia says before running out.

"It couldn't be, could it?" Emma asks.

"No, not possible," I say in complete denial.

"Who?" Bella asks completely clueless.

Who indeed?|..

4. An old Friend

****A/N I'm sorry that it took forever for me to update, I didn't have the weekend to work on it, and then when I did finish my internet was being lame and wouldn't work so that I can upload.****

****Anyways, thanks for the reviews, and please review some more to get a hopefully faster update! ****

****By the way, in case anyone thought that I owned H2O, I don't, and I just want to disclaim that.****

****Read and review ****

Chapter 4: An old Friend

****Rikki's POV****

All of our thoughts converged together to reach our only choice for who Julia could have been talking about: Miss Chattum.

The three of us tried to deny it, I mean she told us she wasn't a mermaid anymore, and she gave it up. But then it occurred to us, maybe that was a lie; maybe none of what she said was true. Either way, we had to know.

So, after a quick explanation to Bella, we ran out the doors after Julia. There was no doubt where she would go.

We sped off into the water, unaware that we were being watchedâ€¦.

****The moon pool****

****No POV****

Julia was sitting in the wand, drying off and thinking about what she could do to get the queen and Jessica out of the "Doctor's" clutches. She knew what she had told the others would draw them to her, wanting answers. Therefore, she was not surprised to hear splashing behind her, and saw Rikki followed closely by the others.

"Julia! Who is she?" Rikki demands almost instantly.

"As if you don't know," Julia whispers.

"Just tell us," Emma says,

"Miss Chattum, as you call her, is the queen with Jessica her daughter," Julia says.

Cleo, Emma and Rikki share a look before Rikki says, "We'll come up with a plan."

"Good, make it good," Julia says.

Rikki's eyes narrow, but she turns around to leave. The rest follow suit choosing to ignore Julia's last statement.

****Hours later****

****Rikki's POV****

I still can't believe Miss Chattum is the queen, and trapped in Denman's lair. As if we don't have enough going on at the moment. Sitting on the bed, I try to think of ways to get Miss Chattum and

Jessica out of Denman's lair.

"Hey love, how's it going?" Zane asks coming into the room.

"Alright I guess, I just can't think of anything that would help," I say.

"Maybe just let it simmer for a while, let Denman think that you guys aren't going to save them. Hell, we don't even know if she's watching you guys or knows about you guys again," Zane says.

"I guess you're right, it's just we don't know what they are going through right now," I say.

"Well, I know that, but we need to focus on more important things," he says glancing at my bulging stomach.

"Yes, of course," I say and the conversation turns to the baby.

****A couple of days later****

****The cafÃ©****

****Emma's POV****

As Ash and I run the cafÃ© while Rikki and Zane are out, I start to talk about the baby. Since no one is really here, he just keeps nodding as if he's paying attention, but I don't think he is.

"Ash, are you even listening to me?" I finally ask.

"Yes, of course," he mutters.

"It doesn't seem like it."

"I am, but I've been thinkingâ€¦"

"About what?" I ask.

"Well, it seems that you girls only gave yourselves one choice when it came to the babiesâ€¦ to keep them."

"What are you trying to say," I sat slowly.

"That there are other options to consider."

"Excuse me?"

"I don't mean abortion, I meant adoption," Ash says quickly.

"Why would any of us do that?" I ask.

"Well, it's an option to think about."

"Well, I'm not sure it's a real choice, not now anyways," I say.

"Well, why not?"

"It feels too lateâ€¦. We are already attached to them."

"Could you at least give it some thoughtâ€¦. I mean we are only 18 and in collegeâ€¦"

"I guessâ€¦but I should goâ€¦ I need to study bye," I say before clocking out and running off.

****At the moon pool****

Rikki and Bella were already there when I arrived. I heard the end of their conversation.

"So, I haven't thought about this whole queen thing," Bella says.

"Do you not care?"

"Honestly, we have way more important things like the babiesâ€¦"

"Yes, I know. I can't exactly forget since I have more than one, but miss C is important too."

"More than one?" I ask announcing my presence.

"Hey, Emma, way to be an eavesdropper," Rikki says.

"Sorry, but I did only just get here," I say.

"That's okay, we can wait for Cleo to talk more about the babiesâ€¦ right now I came up with some ideas to get miss C," Rikki says.

"I still don't think that it's our job to care," Bella responds.

"Look, you weren't around for our changing to understand, but we care. She's a great old friend that helped us, now we have to help her," I say.

"Emma, I understand, but where was she last year or the majority of the year before?" Bella asks.

"Maybe she couldn't help us or maybe she was bothered by us splitting up and you coming along," I say angrily.

"Really, Emma? You're going to go there?" Bella asks.

"Yes, I'm going there. If you want to be a part of us, you have to care about the people we care about," I start to yell.

"No, I don't! I care about those who actually care about me. Do you think that any of those mermaids who ignored me for half my life actually care now? They don't, they never did, and they never will! So, I'm not going to help them," Bella says before turning around and swimming out of the moon pool.

Just then Cleo pops up, and asks, "What just happened?"

Before I could start, Rikki cuts me off saying, "I have a planâ€¦"

****Bella's POV****

As I pull myself onto the shore, I think angrily about what Emma had said. Before I had even completely dried off, Charlotte comes out from behind a rock and says, "You look a little upset, old friend."

"Charlotte, hi," I say.

"Nice tail," she remarks looking completely unsurprised.

"Um, yah, do you remember anything about my tail," I ask hesitantly.

"Of course, we are old friends, so I know everything," she says with a smile.

"Everything?"

"Everything."

5. AN

Hey guys, I'm sorry if I got you excited for no reason, but I really need feedback for me to continue this story because last time I got as far as chapter 25 (per written) BEFORE I found that no one was understanding the story so please read ad review, let me know you are actually interested, please. I already have chapter 5 done, but I want to finish ore writing chapter 6 before I put it up, I would expect it no later than Sunday, but only if you review.

Thanks,

Jenjentheboscostick

6. the Plan and The Moon

A/N I am glad that you guys and girls responded to my author's announcement, hopefully you will continue to review so I won't have to resort to that. So, without further ado: the next chapter.

In answer to some questions, I haven't mentioned any rain or morning sickness because I haven't been focusing on it as much. Just like they are all in college, but it hadn't been mentioned.

Another note would be that they didn't recognize Miss C because spending so much time as a mermaid makes her lose years, like makes you feel younger so she looks younger type of thing.

Oh, and none of the babies will die, I promise you that.

****Chapter 5: The Plan and the Moon****

****A couple of days later****

****Cleo's POV****

Rikki's plan was being set in motion today. Starting with Lewis and Ash showing interest in Denman's work. Then Emma and Rikki are going to follow them and hopefully get a better idea of the area where they are being held. After we find proof that they are being unwillingly kept, I'm going to the police to arrest Denman and break them free.

If it doesn't work out, the plan is to bring awareness to our existence. Hoping that people will react better than the last timeâ€¦|.

****Rikki's POV****

Emma and I are currently sneaking around Denman's lair. Lewis and Ash have already gotten inside to help Denman. It is obvious that Denman is being careful enough to stop anyone from prying with keypads, scanners, and closed off windows so no one can get in or see in. We tried everything, but the place was locked tight, so we left.

Unfortunately, I didn't get far. After a few minutes, Emma and I split up, and before I knew what was happening, I was blindfolded and being led inside what I could only assume to be Denman's lair. Oh this can't be goodâ€¦|.

****A few hours later****

****No POV****

Cleo and Emma were sitting with Zane, and waiting on the other three to show up at the cafÃ©. They had no idea that Rikki would never show up. It took 15 minutes for Lewis and Ash to show up. When they did, they weren't smiling. They sat down and Lewis was the first to speak.

"We have another problem."

"Where's Rikki?" Zane asks.

"That's the problemâ€¦|Denman's got her and the security around the place is quite intense."

"Denman has her? How's that possible?" Emma asks.

"She saw you girls outside the lair, but she couldn't get to you, and settled for just Rikki."

"So, what happened? What happens now? We can't sit and wait," Zane says.

"We'll figure this out, don't worry," Ash says.

"You don't know that, what are we going to do?" Zane asks more urgently.

"Relax, we have proof that Rikki and the others are in danger. So we follow the plan as before and hope the cops help," Lewis says.

"Then let's go now."

"Sorry, we can't, I'm sure that someone is watching us, and if we make any sudden movements, they could move the mermaids they have," Lewis says.

"So, how is waiting going to help?" Zane asks.

"It just willâ€¦" Lewis says.

Just then Will runs in, and practically yells, "Have you seen Bella?"

****Denman's Lair****

****Rikki's POV****

After I was led into the room with a pool, they took off my blindfold, and told me to dive in. I tried to avoid it, and pretended that I didn't hear them, but I failed. They then took to pushing me in. When I came up for air, I realized that I wasn't alone even though the guys that brought me in here had left.

"I guess walking away wasn't getting me out of this," a voice behind me says.

"Bella? How did this happen?" I ask.

"Honestly, I don't even know. One minute I was being confronted by our dear old friend, Charlotte, the next I'm blindfolded and knocked out. I woke up here a few hours later."

"You've been here for two days?" I ask.

"I guess so. Does that mean the full moon's tomorrow?" Bella asks.

"Yes, it does. Well, at least we might be safe from it here," I say.

"No, that's worse. I heard them talking about the full moon. Apparently, since the "queen" is locked up her powers are gone. Right now they are floating around waiting for her to get out or find a new ownerâ€¦"

"New owner?"

"Yes, if someone whether mermaid or not was to be that she can get whatever in the moon pool tomorrow when the full moon is over it they would receive her powers forever."

"And Charlotte is planning to be there when it happens?"

"That's the plan."

"What about us?"

"Honestly, I'm not sure they even care about us. Charlotte just wants control of all the mermaids so that she can get whatever she wants."

"Charlotte? What does she want from us? And why is Denman doing her bidding?"

"Denman wants the riches of exposing us and experimenting on us."

"Why doesn't she just let Charlotte become a mermaid and do it to her? Why us? Because the last few times she's tried that, it has worked so well."

"Well, maybe she thinks we will give in to her," Bella says.

"Give in to her? Why would we do that?"

"Charlotte will have the power to make our lives hell, makes us be single mothers because she wants Lewis, Sophie wants me away from Will, and to be with Zane. Don't you get it? She feels like she can make us do anything she wants, and wouldn't it be easier to just give in?" Bella states.

"We can't let that happen. Somehow, we need to get the word out that the plan has changed, maybe someone else can get the power, than she'll have nothing."

"But how?" Bella asks.

"I don't know, but we can't let this unfairness happen to us. It's just not fair."

"Life isn't fair," says a voice behind us.

****The cafÃ©****

****No POV****

Will had just come in asking for Bella, and stunning the group into silence, when Lewis's phone rang. He didn't hesitate to answer when he saw the number.

"Hello."

"Hello Lewis, I need you and Ash to be at the lab as soon as possible, I have a surprise for you."

"Of course, we will be there soon."

He hangs up, tells the rest what happened, and that the cop need to be involved first thing tomorrow before they left.

7. Breakout

A/n hey guys, sorry for the delay, but with work and school, I have been busy. And I am going on vacation on Sunday, but I hope to update again the following weekend.

Anyways, as a special treat to chinaluv for always reviewing, you can summit some possible baby, if you want to that is.

To everyone else please read and review so I know what you

think

Disclaimer: I don't own H2O, sorry I have never said this before.

****Chapter 6: Breakout****

****Denman's Lair****

There was a knock at the door, and Charlotte went to answer.

"Hello, Lewis, I'm glad you came."

"Hi, Charlotte, and I came to protect the girls, not for you," Lewis responds.

"Come in, guys, we have much to discuss," Denman says waving them in.

The four of them go to a table in a room where they can see three tanks. One was empty, but the other two held two of the four mermaids making Bella and Rikki together as well as Miss C and Jessica together.

"I'm sure you remember our quests," Denman tells Lewis and Ash.

Since they know that she knows they know the mermaids, they don't bother to object her statement. "Yes, and you realize they are human as well, and therefore have rights," Lewis says.

"Oh, I don't plan to keep them pocked up forever, as long as they keep to the deal," Denman says,

"What deal?" Ash asks.

"I become queen, and the girls do whatever I or my real friends want," Charlotte says with a grin.

"And who are your "real" friends?" Lewis asks.

"Dr. Denman, Sophie, and anyone who can't stand those girls," Charlotte replies.

"I get why you don't like Cleo and Rikki, but what did Emma and Bella really do," Ash asks.

"They choose the wrong side, they choose to sit by while I lost my powers, twice!"

"Just because the friendship didn't work out doesn't mean you should hurt them," Lewis says.

"Yes, it does. They put me in pain, they took everything from me. I could and will do the same to them. They deserve it."

"No, they don't! Have you given them a chance to explain or actually being friends without having an ulterior motive? You were never meant to be friends with them because you were always jealous," Lewis states.

"Only because they excluded me, and she stole you from me. They made you hate me."

"They didn't make me hate you, you did," Lewis mutters.

****Meanwhile****

****No POV****

Zane walks down the road towards the café, when he spots someone that he shouldn't: Rikki. He heads over to her, and turns her around to find that it isn't Rikki at all.

"Um, I'm sorry," he says still a little confused.

"It's okay, actually, can you help me?" the girl asks.

"Sure."

"Obviously, I look like your girlfriend, and I'm here to help her defeat Charlotte's plans."

"Ummmâ€¦who are you, first."

"My name is Lizzie Chadwick, and I'm Rikki's twin sister."

"What?"

"It's a long story, and I haven't even met her yet. Could you just bring me to Denman's lab, and distract her while I sneak in?"

"Do I really get a choice?"

"Of course you have a choice, but why say no when your girlfriend is in captivity," Lizzie says.

"Good point," Zane replies.

"All you have to do is bring me to her lair, and get inside, they won't even see me," Lizzie says.

"What are you going to do, become invisible?"

"Sort of."

****Back at the lair****

An argument broke out between the boys and Charlotte. It was about Charlotte's issues with the girls before she really even knew them, and what has happened since. Then came a knock at the door. Denman yelled for the three of them to cool it as she went to answer it.

"Zane?"

"Hi, Dr. Denman, I was wondering if I could speak to Lewis and Ash,"

Zane replies.

"Of course, but why would you come here to talk to them," Dr. Denman says.

"Um well, because it involves you. You see, you have my soon to be wife and she really shouldn't be tested on while pregnant, so I thought that the three of us might be able to convince you to let them go, and wait awhile."

Lewis and Ash just stare at him, as Denman replies, "As if."

"You won't, they deserve this now and babies or no babies is not going to stop this," Charlotte yells.

"Well, at least discuss it," Lewis chimes in.

As an argument breaks out, Lizzie who turned herself into water went up until she was on the landing where the tanks stop and meet the air. Lizzie changed from being water into herself and called for Rikki to come to the surface.

Rikki completely confused came to the surface and found herself looking up at herself or what she used to look like before she became pregnant. Her jaw dropped and she was in complete shock.

Lizzie decided to grab her hand and pull her out of the water, knowing that it would turn her into a mermaid.

"You look like me and you're a mermaid, too?" Rikki asks.

"Look, I don't have time to explain, but my name is Lizzie, I'm your twin, and it's my job to make sure you jump into the moon pool tonight before Charlotte does," Lizzie says in a rush.

"And how do you plan to do that?" Rikki asks skeptically.

"As twins that are both mermaids, we have the power to switch places or become the other. Just think 'I am Lizzie Chadwick' and you'll become me."

"And what good does that do me?"

"I have the power to turn myself into water, so by becoming me you'll be able to slip out of her unnoticed, and I can take your place so no one will notice you're gone," Lizzie explains.

"And I'm just supposed to trust you? And why me? I'm not a better fit to be queen than Charlotte is," Rikki says.

"Listen it is just what Miss C wants, and this is the only night for ten years that the power can be transferred from the queen to the next queen. Please just do it and everything will be explained later."

"Alright, so just think I am you?"

"Yes, and when you get to the moon pool change back to yourself," Lizzie says.

"Let's do this."

Rikki and Lizzie quickly switched places, and went their separate ways.

****Rikki's POV****

As soon as I changed into Lizzie, I found out how easy it is to turn into water. At first, I thought this was some elaborate lie, but for some reason I felt I could trust her, after all, she's choosing captivity until the rest of us can free them.

As soon as I went under the door, I headed for the café thinking that Emma and Cleo needed to know what was going on, but they weren't there, and as it started to rain. Since they weren't here the only place they could be is home or somewhere else that is safe. I went to sit in the office, and ten minutes later I realized that I didn't have to wait out the rain, I could turn into it. So, I walked to the edge of the café's doors, and turned myself into water.

I floated to the ocean, and turned into my mermaid self. I can believe that I don't have this power all the time. Traveling like rain would have made my life so much easier, and faster. Before I knew it, I was speeding my way towards the moon pool.

As I entered the moon pool, I became aware of the fact that I wasn't nauseous or alone.

"Lizzie! You're back," says the strange mermaid who looks an awful lot like Emma.

"Emma?" I ask.

"Ah, you're not Lizzie. Nice to meet you, Rikki," she says.

"And you are?"

"Oh, I'm sorry, my name is Jenna, Jenna Gilbert."

"Gilbert? As in you're related to Emma?"

"I'm her twin, but that's not the point. Could you change back, it feels weird looking at Lizzie when I know it's not her."

"Uh sure," I change and say, "so tell me the story."

"I would, but I think it would be best to have Lizzie tell you," Jenna says.

"Okay, so why are you hiding?"

"I came along to support Lizzie. When you girls were exposed, all of us considered coming to see you. Get to know you, maybe our families will accept us, but Lizzie was the only one to make the plans. The only one really ecstatic to finally meet you and the others for that matter. The rest of us are still too hurt to face the families that abandoned us because we were different," Jenna says.

"Wait what? You're here just to support her, you don't want to see your family, and you don't even want to be here?"

"It's not that , it's just hard, you don't understand, but maybe Lizzie will help you get it. Anyways, the rain has stopped, and we need to see how long until the moon will be overhead," Jenna replies trying to avoid my questions.

We dive underwater, go outside the entrance, and look up. Judging by the moon's position, we think that it will be over head in an hour. We then look out to sea, and see ab boat headed towards Mako, and most likely had Charlotte on board.

****At the Lair****

****No POV****

The fight was still going on, when Charlotte realized it was time for her to leave. So, she just stopped replying and gathered her things before walking out. The boys just let her go, and tried to stall Denman while waiting for the police to arrive.

About a half hour later, the boys were running out of things to distract Denman whenâ€¦

"Police, open up," yells a voice while banging on the door.

8. New Everything

A/N hey guys, sorry this is days later than I planned, since the end of my trip went crazy. Anyways, I finished chapter 7 on the ride there and halfway through 8 the ride back, but if you guys review, I'll have more incentive to write.

So, if I get three reviews, I'll update by Wednesday night.

And if I get 5, I'll update by Monday night.

It's all up to you, so read and review.

****Chapter 7: New Everything****

****The Lair****

****No POV****

As the police continued the banging, everyone stood shocked. It was a few minutes of banging later when Zane finally opened the door. The police rushed in, and took Denman and her henchman under arrest while others got the girls dried and back to human form.

"We'll need to take you all in as well, to formally make statements and press charges," Officer Bones tells everyone else.

They all file out of the lair, and into the police cars waiting. Once they were in, they drove to the police station, and into separate questions rooms.

****The moon pool****

****Rikki's POV****

****10 minutes till the moon is overhead.****

I still feel uncertain about becoming the new queen, it's really weird to just fall into things like this. Charlotte got here about five minutes ago, and I learned that Jenna has a cool power too: turn herself into a Jelly-like substance and block whole areas. So, that in this case Charlotte can't get near the pool.

It's almost funny to see Charlotte try to barge her way through the goo that is Jenna. Before I know it, the water begins to bubble, and Charlotte starts to scream and pound on Jenna. Over Charlotte's screaming, I hear Jenna encouraging me to jump in, and I do.

Immediately, there's a flash of light and the bubbles surround me. My whole body started tingling and feeling a power rush. Once the moon had passed over, my tail lit up, and another bright flash of light burst through the volcano and then everything goes back to normal.

Suddenly, Jenna turned back into herself, and Charlotte fell to the floor. The next thing we hear is the sounds of people sliding down into the volcano. Immediately, Jenna runs and hides while Charlotte quickly gets up and starts dusting herself off. She turns around to face the police and Emma and Cleo?

"Rikki?" Emma asks.

"Emma, Cleo?"

"Rikki, I thought you were stuck in Denman's lab?"

"Uh, yeah, it's quite the story."

"Well, why don't we hear it at the police station, we need to get things sorted out," says the first officer.

We all agree, and the second cuffed Charlotte, and they headed out. Emma, Cleo and I dive under to the boat waiting outside.

It took a while for the police to realize that we can't climb up the ladders because we are wet. So, I decide to see if I can project Lizzie's power onto others. Turning myself into Lizzie and grabbing a hold of Emma and Cleo, I turn us into water, and bring us aboard.

"When did you get that power?" Emma asks,

"It's not mine, its Lizzie's."

"Lizzie's?" Cleo asks.

"That's part of the reason I'm here," I says.

"Well, why don't you explain the situation on the ride back to the main land," the officer holding Charlotte says.

"Okay, well, apparently I have a twin, who is also a mermaid. I guess that she knew I was trapped in Denman's lab, and it was her job to

get me out. I don't really understand because I only talked to her for like 5 minutes, but the plan was for me to jump in the moon pool and become the new queen before Charlotte did. Lizzie told me that we could switch places, I became her and had her power to get out, and to the moon pool, while she stayed there pretending to be me. She told me that it had to be me because that is what miss C wanted. Either way it worked, I stopped Charlotte and all is well," I finish.

"I don't understand, why you?" Emma asks.

"I don't either, just that, it was what was planned," I say.

"Well, let's wait until we hear her side," the officer states.

****About a half hour later****

****At the police station****

Everyone was sitting in a room to listen to the full story. Lizzie explained what happened to us with Denman before, and how we had been, exposed. Then she explained how excited she was to finally meet me, and how she came here specifically to do that. Then she found out the queen was locked up, and the plan for the power transfer to Charlotte. That's when miss C jumped in. she told us that power transfers happened every ten years, and usually it gets passed down to an offspring, but she knew that the power was not meant for Jessica, it was somehow meant for me. So, when they were taken she spread the word that I had to become the queen. That's why Julia came to get us involved instead of other mermaids. Then Lizzie took it back up to explain how we can essentially switch places, and how she ended up here. Then it was my turn, I explained how I got the power and stopped Charlotte from becoming a mermaid then what happened to bring the rest of here.

After that we were forced to listen to Denman's and Charlotte's stories before they were charged with kidnapping and keeping us captive. They received 5 years and we made sure that the officers were going to keep our secret before we headed home.

Everyone felt a lot more relieved now that we had a few years before we had to worry again. I saw Lizzie waiting for me, and I decided to hold up a finger signaling that she should wait while I walked over to Emma.

"Hey, do you want to come with me to my doctor's appointment? I think we need to do another checkup," I say.

"Sure, but why?"

"Honestly, I think we may be farther along or something, and with everything that has been going on, it's probably best," I say.

"Alright, call our special doctor tomorrow," she says.

"Good thanks," I say. After seeing her next to Cleo and Bella, I realized that we both look a lot further along, and that thought bothers me, so I decided I should bring her to the doctor with

me.

As she walks away, I walk up to Lizzie and Zane.

"Hey, Lizzie, why don't you come stay at our place. I know you have nowhere else to stay and I really would like to hear your full story, and tell Jenna, she's welcome too."

"Wow, Rikki, really? That's great, I'll go get her," she says, gets directions, and heads for the water.

I smile and look up at Zane, to see he was confused. I just told him that everything would be explained later. So, we headed home.

****Rikki and Zane's place****

****An hour later****

****Zane's POV****

I sat confused on the couch as the girl who looks like Rikki and the girl that looks like Emma explain themselves.

"Okay, first an important thing to know is that our moms are twin sisters, so Jenna and Emma are our cousins. When we were about four, mom was just babysitting me and Jenna for some reason, and she took us to Mako. Obviously, you know what happened there," Lizzie says.

"Well, your mom was pretty excited about this development. On the other hand, when my mom gave me a bath, she was shocked to find out her daughter was a fish. They tried to change us back, and did everything they could to pretend it didn't happen or to fix it, but in the end they just couldn't," Jenna sort of finishes.

"But mom and dad argued about money," Rikki says slowly.

"Yes, but that wasn't the only thing," Lizzie replies.

"So, that was just the story I was told?" Rikki asks.

"Yes, anyways, you know why I'm actually here. We took off from home to get to know you, and maybe become a big part of your life?" Lizzie says tentatively.

"I'd like that, but we'll have to see how things go, in the meantime, Jenna, I think you should talk to Emma and the rest of your family," Rikki says.

All I heard was that we were going to have quests for a while.

"I'll try, but maybe you should try out some of those new powers," Jenna says.

"Oh that's right, I have new powers, a new sister, and new life. Wow, I guess I just have new everything," Rikki says,

"Well, miss new everything, I think it's time for bed, we have classes tomorrow," I says.

"Alright, pick a room, and I'll see you tomorrow," Rikki says.

9. Families

A/N hey guys, I guess trying to give you a reason to review didn't work, so I decided not to push myself to finish this chapter, but I finally did, and I hope that since it's my longest yet, you guys will reward me with review. Enjoy

****Chapter 8: Families****

****Next day****

****At school****

****Rikki's POV****

I sit at a table waiting for Emma so that we can go to our appointment. School for me was done about an hour ago, but she took an additional class. I wonder if my suspicions are correct, and both of us are really carrying twins. Then I start to think about Lizzie and Jenna, how they grew up, what they think about everything. I couldn't imagine knowing that I couldn't live as a whole family because I have a tail. It really isn't right.

I know that Jenna wants to wait awhile before approaching Emma, but maybe I could ask her questions, get a feel for how she would react to finding out she has a twin. I start to go off in a daze, when suddenly; Emma's snapping her fingers in my face.

"Oh, hey Em," I say.

"What are you thinking about?"

"Not much, let's get going," I say.

We start towards the doctor's office, and a few minutes later, Emma asks, "Was it Lizzie?"

"I guess you could say that, it's just different, you know?"

"I understand I don't know how I would react to finding out my twin was sent away because she was different," Emma replies.

"Would you accept her, like I have," I question.

"Well, I couldn't turn her away," she says.

"Some people would say it's possible," I respond.

"That's not right, if we had told our parents right away that could have been us, it really wouldn't be her fault," Emma says.

"Great," I think, "this is perfect." Then I say, "Well, that's good, would you and Ash like to come over for dinner tonight?"

"Sure, I guess," she replies, "Look there's the office."

We go inside and check in.

We had to wait about twenty minutes before our special doctor called us in. There was only one good thing about Denman's research on us, she led us to a doctor for our babies that would keep our secret and the secret of our babies being born as mermaids, and after we fixed everything, we went back to her because we knew that she would continue to keep our secret.

Walking into the room, I told Emma to go first. The doctor checked her weight and vital signs before having her lay down. She applied the gel to Emma's stomach, and got the picture of not one but two babies and two heartbeats. I was right.

"Congrats, Emma, you're having twins," the doctor says.

Emma looked chocked as she dried off, and got up silently to sit on the bench next to me.

"Are you okay," I ask.

"I don't know, I'll explain after you go," Emma replies.

"Okay then," I say as I get weighed and checked before lying down. The gel gets applied, and before long, I confirm my suspicions: I have twins, too.

As we leave the office with a promise to come back in a month, Emma turns to me and says, "Ash wants me to have my baby adopted. What is he going to say when I tell him I have two?"

"I don't know, Em, but don't worry we are in this together, and he can't make you do anything you don't want to do," I say.

"I guess, but how am I going to tell him? And what about Bella? We are expecting two babies not three."

"Well, I'm sure you and Bella can work it out, and as for Ash, why don't we tell him and Zane at dinner tonight?" I ask.

"Alright, maybe I'll feel better with you there, but I need to talk to Bella first. Meet you at your house in about two hours," she says.

"Deal."

****Emma and Bella's place****

****Emma's POV****

I walk through the door to find Bella doing homework at the kitchen table.

"Hey Bella, do you have a second to talk?"

"Of course, what's up?"

"I was just at the doctor's and"

"Oh my word, is something wrong?"

"No, I just found something outâ€¦."

"Well, tell me!"

"I'm having twins."

"Oh that's all? I thought it was something serious," Bella says.

"Well, it kind of is. It's probably going to throw everything off balance," I say.

"So, we have an extra baby. It's not a big deal. We can just get extra stuff, and the baby's room has plenty of room for the three of them," she says.

"Alright, I guess. I thought you were going to freak out," I say.

"Nah, we'll just stick with our plan, and add in an extra baby. Besides, we have the guys to help out," Bella says.

"You're right, speaking of the boys, Ash and I got invited to Rikki's so you can have whatever you want for dinner," I say.

"Cool, I'll invite Will over."

****About an hour later****

****Rikki and Zane's place****

****Rikki's POV****

As Zane and I prepare the pasta, I think about the upcoming dinner. Emma, Ash, Zane, and Jenna are all getting a surprise at dinner. I told Zane that I invited them, but I don't want Lizzie or Jenna to know what I had in store for them. They don't even know that we are having guests. What a fun dinner this will be.

Ding dong.

As I walk to answer the door, I hear Lizzie question who it could be. "Come on in, guys. Zane's just setting the table."

Lizzie was helping get everything to the table, as Jenna sits waiting patiently. As soon as we come into view, Jenna's mouth dropped, and she tried to hide her face, but Emma and Ash could still see her.

"Rikki, who's this?" Emma asks trying to stay calm.

I go to answer, but Jenna cuts me off.

"My name is Jenna, Jenna Gilbert, and this isn't how I planned to meet you, but nice to meet to you," she says extending her hand.

Emma hesitates with a shocked look on her face. I can see that Jenna is losing her confidence as the time passes. Everyone stood frozen

watching what Emma would do. "Did I make a mistake?" I wonder. Then suddenly Emma grabs Jenna's hand and shakes it.

I let out a breath I didn't know I was holding, and say, "Well, why don't we sit down, and you girls can get to know each other."

"Yes, but first, can I speak to you," Emma says and points to the other room.

We both walk over to the other room, and I prepare myself for her yelling.

"What is the matter with you?" she asks in a harsh, but somewhat quiet tone.

"Nothing, I just know that you should meet her, get to know her, understand what she's gone through all these years," I say.

"I'm not saying that isn't important, but a little warning would've been nice. I showed up here, nervous because of the news I'm going to share with my boyfriend, and now you're going to add this to my plate?"

"I'm sorry, I just thought with our talk this afternoon went well, and that she shouldn't hide from you," I say.

"I guess, but you should've told me."

"I will next time, now can we go eat?" I ask.

"Alright, let's go," she says.

We walk back into the kitchen to see that everyone was seated, but waiting for us to eat. Emma and I sat next to each other and across from our twins. The boys sat at the ends of the table, next to me was Zane, and Ash was next to Emma, of course. After we were all seated, Zane says, "Alright let's eat."

We start to eat, and it is a few minutes before Emma says, "So, tell me, why now and why you're here and didn't come to me right away."

"Well, honestly, I came because I wouldn't let Lizzie come alone. What if Rikki rejected her? What if everything blew up in her face? She would need someone to talk to. I mean, I'm not only her best friend, I'm family, too," Jenna says.

"Wait, family?" Emma asks.

"Oh, right. Well, you see, our moms are also twins, but fraternal instead. So, that would make us cousins," Lizzie says.

"Wow, and to think all the thing I've said about Rikki being messy and stuff, and how it's her parents' fault, that could have been me," Emma says.

"Haha, very funny," I say.

"Anyways, I came for her. Not that I didn't want to meet you, but you heard Lizzie's story. Well, it's the same for me except my whole

family abandoned me, at least Lizzie has her mom," Jenna says then look at her plate.

"I'm sorry you feel that way, Jenna, but maybe we can make up for it now. Maybe I should tell my parents my secret, and if they take it well then I could tell them about you being here," Emma says.

"I don't want you to risk yourself for me, but maybe we can figure something else out. Let's just get to know each other," Jenna says quickly.

"Okay, so where did you move to after the incident?" Emma asks.

I was actually quite interested in the answer since all I know was the story leading up to their tails.

"Actually, we live in America. A small coastal town in a state called South Carolina. We chose a coastal town because of our tails, obviously," Jenna says.

"Did you go to school and stuff? Did you hide your tails?" Emma asks.

"Yes to both. After being rejected by our families, we decided that it was best kept a secret," Lizzie answers.

"Just like us," I say.

The conversation continues along the basics like favorite foods, and what school was like there. Then came the desert, and that's when Emma and I agreed to tell everyone about u having twins.

"Okay, okay. Emma and I have an announcement," I say.

"Yes, we went to our doctor today, and found outâ€|" Emma starts.

"We are having twins," we both say together.

Jenna and Lizzie congratulate us, and Zane was ecstatic, but Ash had a different reaction.

"Are you crazy, we can't have twins," he yells.

As shocked as we all were, we knew enough to know that we should leave the room. Zane and I sat in the living room while Lizzie mouthed, "I have to make a phone call," and then ran up the stairs with Jenna by her side.

I wonder who they have to callâ€|

****In a small town on the coast of South Carolina****

****No POV****

****11pm last night by Australian time****

A young brunette walks to an apartment as if she's on a mission. She bursts through the door without knocking or anything else.

There are two blondes sitting up at the table, obviously waiting for her. The younger one, who expected the brunette to be angry after the phone call, asks, "How was it?"

"They're happy! Can you believe that? They go out on a limb to find the people who abandoned us, and have the indecency to be happy?" the brunette practically yells.

"They should be happy, Kelly. They did the right thing. It's their fault our parents did what they did," the younger blonde yells back.

"Are you kidding me, Diana? Mom and dad kicked me out at fifteen with two four year olds to look after. All because of one mistake. It wasn't like I did it on purpose," the older blonde yells.

"I'm not saying it's your fault, I'm saying give them a chance," Diana says.

"Anyways, that's pretty much what Jenna and Lizzie said. Although neither one of them have met anyone else in their families," Kelly says.

"So, maybe we should go visit, like they did," Diana suggests.

"You girls go; I'm not interested in being rejected again. Besides, someone need to be here when Marybeth figures out that those two aren't visiting colleges," the older blonde says.

"Bethany, mom and dad could've changed. Maybe they will be happy to see you again," Diana replies.

"No, it's best I stay here. Besides, it's not like I have a twin over there," Bethany replies.

"Alright then, let's get planning," Diana says.

"Okay, but I don't know if I'm ready for this," Kelly replies.

"But we have to try."

A/n over 2000 words, come on I should get plenty of reviews.

10. A Repeat

A/N hey guys, I'm so sorry that I couldn't update earlier I just didn't have the chapter started. I was so happy to see the reviews come up so fast after updating and I felt bad that I couldn't reward you guys with a chapter right away, but here it finally is, and I hope that it is worth more reviews.

By the way, for anyone who else was confused by the end of the last chapter, I meant to be mysterious and obvious at the same time. If you tell me what exactly confused you, I will help you understand better.

Read and review

****Chapter 9: A Repeat****

****An hour later****

****Rikki and Zane's place****

****Emma's POV****

Ash finally stormed out after yelling at me for an hour. I can't believe that he blame me for this. I completely break down as I realize that this is the second time he's has walked out on me. It doesn't take long for Rikki to rush to my side.

"Em, are you okay?"

I look at her with an "Are you kidding me look?"

"I heard the argument, but it'll be alright," she says.

"Will it? Seriously, this I the second time he's walked out on me," I say.

"So, he's obviously got issues. Give him time, he'll come around," she says.

"What if he doesn't? What if I'm a single teenage mother of twins?" I ask.

"You maybe a teenager and a mother, but you won't be alone. We will help you, with or without Ash, you will be fine," Rikki says.

"How? Everyone else has a guy in their life hat I going to be a father, and what do I have? A deadbeat who keeps walking out on me," I say.

"Like I said before, we will help you, and if he's going to be like that than you and your children are better off," Rikki says.

"Better off without a father?"

"Better off without someone who comes and goes," she say.

"So, if he wants to come backâ€¦"

"Tell him that you can't deal with him coming and going, he has to be solid," Rikki says.

"He can lie though, he can say that he'll be there, and walk away for the third time," I say.

"Maybe the guys can help him realize that leaving you is wrong, and that it isn't fair to toy with you like this. After all, it worked the first time," Rikki says.

"I guess it couldn't hurt to have the guys talk to him," I say.

"Good, now why don't we go for a swim, so you can be calmed down some more," she says.

"Alright, let's go," I say.

As we walk past the stairs, she yells to our twins that we were going for a swim and she'd be back, and then we took off.

****The next day****

****Zane's POV****

Rikki encouraged me to call Lewis and Will to help me talk to Ash about what he's doing to Emma. since I make his work schedule, I knew that he got off at 4, and arranged for Will and Lewis to meet us at the caf  .

I see Lewis and Will sitting in a booth waiting on us, so I make my move. "Ash, come walk with me?"

"Okay," he says with a confused look on his face.

I walk him towards the booth, and when we arrive, I say, "slide in."

To my surprised he actually does, and I slide in, next to him.

"Is this about last night?" he asks.

"Of course it is, what were you thinking?" Lewis asks.

"I was thinking that I can't do this! It isn't fair, I'm 18, and she won't even think about adoption," he yells.

"How the hell is she supposed to adopt out her babies?" I ask.

"What do you mean? Every girl has that choice," Ash responds.

"Our girls don't," Lewis says.

Ash continues to look lost.

"The girls are mermaids," Lewis says hoping that made it obvious.

He failed when Ash answered with, "Way to state the obvious."

"The babies will be mermaids and merman. How do you plan on explaining that to the kid's adoptive parents?" Lewis asks.

"Well, just tell them it's some new gift," Ash says stupidly.

"First off, that's just insane, and second, that would blow the secret," Will says.

"Fine, go that's not an option, but I have another option: walking away. I don't have to this," Ash says.

"So, you're going to let her be a single mother of two at 18?" I ask.

"Well, I can't handle this," Ash says.

"Don't you love her?" Lewis asks.

"Honestly, right now, I don't know," he says.

"What do you mean you don't know? You made love to her over four months ago, and you don't know if you love her?" Lewis asks outraged.

"We were just so excited to see each other again that things got out of hand, and I did think that I loved her," Ash responds.

"So, what changed? She got pregnant?" I ask.

"Yes, it made me realize that I'm not ready to settle down," Ash says.

"It doesn't matter that you're ready or not. You created those kids, and you can't walk out on her," I say.

"Zane's right, not to mention that you don't have to marry her right now or ever, but you do have to be there for your kids," Will says.

"I can't, I just can't. I have a life to live and it's not my fault adoption isn't an option," Ash says.

"That's not her fault either, and what about the fact that you're going to see her in school, at work and you live in the apartment above her. Are you just going to ignore her and your children?" I ask.

"Well, I think they are better off with me," Ash says.

"NO child is better off without a parent, trust me I know," I say.

"Well, my children are," Ash says then pushes me out of the booth and walks off.

I look to Lewis and Will to see their reactions, and they both shrug. I guess we failed, either way time for work.

****About two hours later****

****At Rikki and Zane's place****

****No POV****

While Rikki and Emma were swimming in the pool, Jenna and Lizzie were making some snacks. When the doorbell rang, Lizzie didn't hesitate to answer it, but was surprised to see who it was: her father.

"Rikki?" he says questioningly.

"No dad, it's me, Lizzie," she says.

"Lizzie," he says tentatively.

"Yes, dad. Are you still disgusted by me and mom?"

"No, I was just shocked, and I reacted the wrong way. I never should've sent you away, is your mother with you? Does Rikki know about you, where is she?" he says in a rush.

"She's in the pool, follow me," Lizzie says.

****In the pool****

****Rikki's POV****

The funny thing about a pool is that it is so different from the ocean, but just as peaceful. Emma told me that he didn't want to run into Ash, so she's been spending her spare time here. I hope that the boys can calm Ash down, so he will realize what I best for Emma is to be with her. Suddenly, I can hear someone calling me to the surface so I point for Emma to come up with me.

When I reach the surface, I see Lizzie standing next to my father?

"Dad," I question.

"Yes, and you're a mermaid," He says slowly.

"Uh, yah, I'm sorry I've been hiding it from you, but I've been this way since that day I got stuck on Mako and the water police had to get us," I say.

"And you didn't tell me because you knew what I did to Lizzie and your mother right?"

"No, not at all. I had no idea about Lizzie until a couple of days ago," I say.

"So, why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't think I could, I had no idea what you would say or do," I say.

"I would have understood. It only took me two weeks to realize the mistake I made with your mother and sister, but by that time it was too later to do anything. I'm sorry," he finishes looking at Lizzie.

"It's okay, or it will be if we both give each other a chance," Lizzie says.

"As long as you accept us now," I add.

"Of course," he says.

We all smile and decide to get out so we can eat something. No more repeats in my family.

****The next day****

****Emma's POV****

After seeing Rikki's family make amends, I decided to introduce Jenna to her family that she has been deprived of all these years. Since my

parents invited me to dinner because I told them I had news about the baby, I asked if I could bring a friend, and of course they said yes.

As we head over to my family's house, I can see that Jenna is beyond nervous, and honestly so am I. What if they aren't as remorseful as Rikki's dad was? What if they hate us more?

Stop thinking like that, I tell myself as we begin up the sidewalk. Bad thoughts lead to bad happenings. Think happy thoughts.

I ring the doorbell because I don't live here anymore and it might be rude just to walk in.

Ding dong.

I hear my little brother yelling, "Just a minute," before opening the door.

He opens the door and hugs me right away before moving back to let us in. He looks at Jenna strangely before calling to mom and dad, "Look Emma's here."

Mom and dad come around the corner, and smile until they saw Jenna. Dad's smile didn't completely fade just faltered. Mom's on the other hand turned into a downright scowl.

"Emma, who's this?" my dad asks.

"This is your long lost daughter, and my twin sister, Jenna," I say.

Before anyone could respond to that my mom yells, "I don't want that fish in my house."

"She's not a fish, she's a mermaid," I say.

"Same thing to me, and there was a reason we sent her away. I will not have her here," my mom yells.

"Why not?" I ask.

"You know why," she answers.

"I want you to say it," I say.

"I don't want to eat with that creature. I never have and never will," she says.

"Oh really? Because I'll have you know that you have," I say plugging my hand into a pitcher of water. I watch as my mom's eyes grow wide and everyone else has shocked looks on their faces.

I fall to the floor with my tail, and look up. I see my mom storm out of house clearly angry, my dad looking conflicted, and Eliot excited.

"Honey, can we talk about this in a few minutes? I need to talk to your mother," my dad says.

"Of course, um could we just dry me off, and start eating," I say.

"Yes, go ahead, and Jenna, I'm sorry this is how you met our family after so many years away," he says then goes after mom.

Jenna helps me get dry, and the three of us sit at the table. Eliot starts spouting off all sorts of questions and things. Mainly interested in how we kept it a secret all these years.

I told him everything, and after he settled down after me, he starts asking Jenna all sorts of questions too. I think that after worrying what my brother would think of my lie that I never thought of how he would react to the actual thing.

Before long we were all happy and talking like nothing had changed, but then mom and dad came in. They both sat down, and dad explained that our mom was just upset, but that she will try to be more understanding about our situation.

She didn't apologize, but she did ask about us. About how thing happened, and more importantly how Jenna grew up without her family in a country across the world.

All in all, things ended well. Although mom isn't totally comfortable with us, she's finding that she may in time. Before we leave I remember why I came here tonight.

"Okay, so now that you met Jenna and everything is okay, I have something to share," I start.

"Go on, tell us," my dad urges me.

"I'm having twins," I say.

Everyone says congratulations, and we start the baby talk, and how I plan to make this work without Ash.

****Half-way across the world****

****At a small caf   in South Carolina****

****Sits a woman with curly blonde hair and bright blue eyes.****

As she sits there, sipping her smoothie through a straw, her friend, Bethany stops by.

"Hi Marybeth, you don't look happy," Bethany says as she sits.

"Hi Bethany, and I'm not happy, I just got a phone call."

"And? I get phone calls all the time, theyou don't look happy," Bethany says as she sits.

"Hi Bethany, and I'm not happy, I just got a phone call."

"And? I get phone calls all the time, they don't make me sad," Bethany says.

"My daughters lied to me. They told me they were going on a college

road trip, not traveling to another country to be a part of families that sent them away."

"Look I understand you're angry that they lied to you, but everything worked out alright," Bethany says.

"They left me for a family that never cared about them. After everything I've done for them, they left me," Marybeth says.

"They don't remember what it was like to be rejected. By the time they asked what happened we changed the story so that they wouldn't look down on our families in Australia," Bethany says.

"I guess, it just really hurts my feelings that they lied to me and then call and expect me to fly over there and have everything work out," Marybeth says.

"The others wanted me to go with them to visit our families as well. I told them that I couldn't face it, not another repeat of the last time, and besides I have a life here. It's been fifteen years, why should we go back now?"

"I thought you were trying to make me feel better, and shed some light on the situation, not question even thinking about it," Marybeth says.

"I don't know, I want to help, but I'm so lost myself I guess I'm not much help," Bethany says.

"We've changed so much in 15 years, I still remember the fear in your eyes when I caught you. You were petrified until I started to dry you off," Marybeth says.

"Well, I was sent away from my family at 15 because I had a tail, and I had to take care of two four-year olds. And the first day I get to a new country someone already finds out my secret, I was terrified," Bethany says.

"It would have been a repeat of what happened at home?" Marybeth says.

"Exactly, that's why I don't want to go back. I'd rather stay here for you," Bethany replies.

"You don't need to be here for me, go meet your family, live happily ever after," Marybeth says.

"I won't do it without you. I think we both need this. Please go with me? That way if history repeats itself, we'll have each other to lean on," Bethany says.

"I'll think about it. I don't know if I can do another repeat, but maybe," Marybeth says.

A/N wow, even longer than last time so, question: should Emma and Ash work things out or should Emma find someone better in her life? And what would you like Rikki's and Emma's twins to be Girls or boys or both? Review to let me know.

11. It's called life

A/n hey guys, I am soooo sorry I haven't had time to update or write or anything else, but I am working hard to finish each chapter so if you'll just be patient with me and review, I will find more time to do this. Oh and I hope this chapter explains anything that is confusing. Thank you, and keep reading and reviewing.

****Chapter 10: It's called Life****

****About a week later****

****March 12****th****-Saturday****

****Rikki's POV****

Lizzie and I went swimming together for our birthday today. The first birthday we can remember ever spending together. We wanted to do something small and intimate so the girls planned a get together with us and our families. The only one not invited was Ash because he decided that he wasn't going to help Emma or be a part of her life. That jerk.

As we near Mako, I point to the moon pool to show her that's where I want to go. Of course we find it empty waitâ€¦noâ€¦it's not empty I can hear voices. I send a questioning look at Lizzie before she yells out, "Guys it's just me and Rikki."

I give her an even more confused look as three blondes and a brunette come into view. "Happy Birthday Lizzie and Rikki!" they all say.

"Thanks," I say.

"Thanks guys, and thanks for coming, this means a lot to me," Lizzie says.

"We are glad to be here, hun," the blonde that looks a lot like the two of us says.

"I can't believe you came," Lizzie says surprised.

"That's great, but I'm so confused," I say.

They stop chatting, and decide to get us out of the water first. Of course Lizzie didn't have any trouble, but the two older blondes had to help me. Once we were on the ground and dried off, Lizzie helped me up.

He pauses before saying, "I have some people I want you to meet."

"Okay," I say.

She points to the second oldest blonde and says, "This is Bethany, Bella and her twin sister's older sister."

She turns to the youngest blonde and says, "and this would be Bella's twin, Diana."

"Nice to meet you two," I say.

"Now this," pointing to the only brunette in the room, "is obviously Cleo twin, Kelly."

I nod to her, and then before I can say anything she jumps right on, and says, "and finally, this is our mother, Marybeth Chadwick."

"Wow," I say because it is the only think I can think of.

"I know this is a surprise, but Lizzie thought was a great idea," my mom says.

It's weird to think my mom is saying something to me, but I respond, "It is a great idea. I just kind of wish I'd known."

"That's good, anyways, I'm just so happy to see you two together again after all these years," Marybeth says.

"Yes, of course it's great, but why is everyone else here," I say.

"We're here because Jenna and Lizzie thought it was best for us that we see our families again," Kelly says with a slight attitude.

"Are you saying you don't really want to meet them?" I ask.

"I don't know, but mine as well try, right?" Kelly says.

"No, absolutely not. You can't just waltz in their house, and turn their worlds upside down for the fun of it! That's not fair to them, and it's just not right at all," I say angrily.

"Rikki, she didn't mean that. She cares, she's just hiding her true feelings," Lizzie says.

"No, I'm not. What's not fair, is that they lived their lives happy and never knowing about us. Why should I come in, and make their lives even better," Kelly says.

I go to retaliate, but Lizzie stops me. "Kelly, stop it. Look we can talk about this later, we have a birthday party to go to," Lizzie says emphasizing the word birthday.

"Oh no, they can't come. We can't just spring this on them, it's not fair," I say totally freaking out.

"No, they're not. I wouldn't do that to you, but Jenna and I are going to come here later. And I thought it would be nice if mom came to our party," Lizzie says.

"That's fine, and we do have to get going," I say.

We wave goodbye and jump in.

****At the café****

****Cleo's POV****

I was just finishing getting everything when I spotted Ash hiding out in a corner, and looking at something in his hand. I felt angry yet curious as to why he would come here. After what he did to Emma, he had no right to be here except if he was working, but on the other hand, he had been avoiding her anyways, so why would he come here knowing he would see her.

So, I walk over to him planning to ask what he thinks he's doing here, but I don't have to. He turned around, and spotted me first. He gets up, and grabs my hand and pulls me outside.

"Ash, what are you doing here?"

"I need to talk to you about Emma," he says.

"First off, what? And second off, why?"

"I feel bad for what I did to Emma. I may not be in love with her, but I found out exactly how much I care about her. We may never get back together or get married, I owe it to Emma to be there for her and our children," he says.

"And how will he know that you aren't going to walk out on her for a third time?" I ask.

"This," he says holding up a ring.

"You're going to propose to her, but you don't want to marry her?" I question.

"No, it's a promise ring. A promise that I'll always be a father to my children and that I'll always help her out with them," he says.

"But you've made that promise beforeâ€¦".

"But this time I have a ring," he says.

"What does a ring matter?" I ask.

"Of course it matters, it's a symbol of my honesty," he says.

"I'm not sure she'll see it that way," I say slowly.

"Please just help me, I promise that I won't let you down," he says.

"What is your plan?"

"All I want you to do, is get Emma to the little Italian place at 7 on Wednesday. I'll be there to plea my case," Ash says.

"I guess I could do that," I say.

"Thanks. I appreciate it. I have to go o she doesn't see me, but don't forget Wednesday at 7, bye," he says then walks off.

Before he gets too far, I yell, "If things don't work out just remember it's called life."

Then I walked back inside, wondering if I'm doing the right thingâ€|.

****An hour later****

****No POV****

Rikki, Lizzie, and their mom were on their way to the cafÃ©. All three were smiling and chatting like there was no tomorrow. Rikki was surprised that things felt so natural. As they walked closer to the cafÃ©, Rikki remembered that no one had any idea that her mom was going to be there.

"Are you ready for this?" Rikki asks.

"Of course, I have to do what's best for my girls," Marybeth says.

"Wow," Rikki says.

The three walked in the cafÃ©, and everything seemed to stop. All chatter ended. And everyone had turned to see the new commers. Most jut yelled "Happy Birthday", but a few focused more on the woman behind the twins.

In fact, most of the adults knew who she is and what she is which is why they stared and wondered how and why she was there.

"Everyone this is my mom," Rikki says.

Everyone stops staring as they all yell hello, and happy birthday. Then return to their chatting. Rikki went off to her friends, and Lizzie walked over to Jenna. As Marybeth turned to follow Lizzie, Terry, their father, walk up to her and says, "Is it really you?"

"Who else would it be?" Marybeth says with a laugh.

"I can't believe you're here, will you come sit with me?" he says.

"Sure."

As the two walk over to one of the farthest booth, they didn't realize that someone hadn't taken her eyes off them. She looked totally ticked off and like she had something to say.

As soon as Marybeth and Terry sat down in the booth, Lisa (Gilbert) finally boiled over and stormed over to the other two, "What do you think you're doing here?" she says glaring at Marybeth.

"It's my daughters' birthday, where else would I be," Marybeth replies.

"You haven't been at Rikki's birthdays for the last 15 years, why come now?"

"That wasn't my fault, and besides I've never missed one of Lizzie's birthdays and I won't stop now," Marybeth replies.

"You weren't invited," Lisa says.

"Actually my daughter want me here, and Lizzie thought that it would be nice to surprise Rikki, and Rikki loved it," Marybeth says.

"Well, Lizzie may have wanted you here, but I'm sure Rikki was just being polite. As for the rest of us, we don't want you here messing up my perfect life," Lisa almost yells.

"It's called LIFE, it's not perfect!"

"My life was perfect, but you just had to ruin it. First by changing Jenna into a fish, and then by making her come back and make Emma admit that she's one, too."

"The first was an accident, I didn't plan that, and the girls came here on their own. I never would have told them to take this risk," Marybeth says.

"If you didn't tell them to come, then why are you here?"

"Because they want me here, and it's time to fix the problems in my family. I shouldn't be missing Rikki's life or my grandchildren's lives. It's time to make things work," Marybeth says.

"We'll see. Don't be surprised if things don't work out," Lisa (Glibert) says before walking out the door.

Their fight was masked by most of the other's chatter, but still Jenna, Emma, Lizzie, and Rikki had all seen. The four of them stood shocked about ten feet away from where Marybeth and Terry sat. Jenna was the first to move. "Mom, it's okay. I'm sure she's the only one that feels that way," Jenna says.

Marybeth just sighs and says, "Honey, I don't think so. It was nice to be here for the few minutes I was here, but I have to go now." She gets up and heads out the door before anyone could stop her.

The four girls look at each other, and Lizzie and Jenna nod at each other before Lizzie says, "She needs her daughters, Rikki, stay here and enjoy your party." Then the two of them head out themselves.

"I'm not considered her daughter?" Rikki asks.

"You are, but those three have been a family since they were four. To them being a daughter/mother is more than flesh and blood, but don't worry we will work this out," Rikki's dad answers.

"I guess you're right."

After that everyone at the party went back to having fun, and celebrating Rikki's 19th birthday.

****Awhile later ****

****At the moon pool****

****Rikki's POV****

After the party, I told Zane that I needed to find my mom, but I would be home after. Knowing that my mom and the girls had gone right back to the moon pool, I went straight there, and of course found them along with the others I had met earlier.

"Are you girls alright?" I ask.

"Of course we are, why even bother coming now? It would be too late now," Kelly says with an attitude.

"First off, I wasn't talking to you and second, her daughters told me to stay at my party," I say emphasizing the s on daughters.

"Okay, fine. Why are you here? Obviously they told you to stay because you're not needed here," Kelly retorts.

Before I can respond, Lizzie tell Kelly that she needs to go in the corner. I almost laughed at the absurdity of it, but I didn't.

"Rikki, you have to understand that we've been a family for 15 years, to us blood doesn't matter. And anyways, mom kind of expected that to happen, that's why we didn't hesitate to leave, and follow her," Lizzie says.

"Okay, but I still feel bad about it," I say.

"Don't feel bad, it's called life, and besides it wasn't that bad, and it wasn't your fault," Marybeth says.

"I feel like it is," I say.

"It doesn't matter, anyways it's time to call it a night. We'll talk tomorrow," Marybeth says.

"Yes, because we need to talk about you girls wanting to mess with people's lives just because you can," I say looking at Kelly, who was still sitting in the corner.

Kelly opened her mouth to respond, but Lizzie stopped her, "You're right. Just because life did this to us, doesn't mean we have to mess up their lives, too."

We all agree, and head out and home.

12. Talks

A/N hey guys, here's the next chapter, I was hoping to get it up sooner, but I haven't had enough time to type it all up. I'm already halfway through the next chapter too o hopefully if I get a lot of reviews then I'll find the motivation to type some more. Here you go, and sorry if this one isn't too interesting, but stay with me.

****Chapter 11: Talks****

****Monday, March 14****th****

****At the cafÃ©****

****Rikki's POV****

The girls and I are meeting here just the four of us to talk. Bella told u that she has something she wants to share with us. So, we all decided to come here after school to hear what he has to say.

Emma, Cleo, and I sit waiting on Bella because of course she was the last to arrive. Here she comes.

"Sorry I'm late, but I'm here now," Bella says rushing in.

"It's okay," Emma and Cleo say together.

"Well, now that we are all here, what did you want to tell us," I say.

"Well, there' something I haven't told you. When Lizzie and Jenna came back, I knew that I would have to tell you this. Like the two of you, I also have a twin. Um, her name is Diana, and as far as I know, she's been living with our older sister, Bethany, somewhere in America. I'm telling you now because I'm thinking about contacting them, and I want your opinion," Bella says.

"How long have you known, and why now?" I ask.

"I found out not much after I changed. I was about 11, and I ventured in my dad's study. There were picture, letters, and other thing that he sent to them and received from them. The pictures of two blonde girls, and then of the same two blondes with tails kind of made it obvious what had happened. I made copies of everything so I could be sure, and I never said anything to my parents. So, I've known since I was 11, and I decided to say something now because thing have worked out for you two, maybe it'll work for me," she says.

"And how do you think that meeting will go? Oh, I knew about you, but didn't bother until now," Emma says.

"It's not only that, but I'm afraid how my parents would react," Bella says.

"You realize that life's not exactly perfect for us right now. Sure, I have a sister, two new cousins, and an aunt, but you better believe that my mom's attitude puts quite the damper on our happy reunion," Emma says angrily.

"Emma, calm down. This is why she wanted to talk to u. although I'm not sure why I'm included," Cleo says.

"Well, we are a team, and it wouldn't feel right not including you," Bella says.

"It doesn't matter, you can't use us as a reason to find your sisters. Not after ignoring their existence for 7 years," Emma says before walking out.

"She's right, I'm a horrible person," Bella says quietly.

"No, you're not, but I do have to go so good luck," Cleo says.

"What do you think, Rikki?" Bella asks me.

"I think that it was wrong of you to ignore them all these years when you knew your dad still kept in contact with them, but I guess it's better late than never. So, you should contact them," I say.

"Thanks," Bella says.

****Lewis and Cleo's house****

****Cleo's POV****

After the caf  , I headed home so that I could talk to Lewis about this whole Emma and Ash thing. I told Ash I would help him out, but I feel bad just thinking about tricking her into meeting with Ash. Hopefully Lewis will help me feel better about it.

"Hey, how was your day?" Lewis says as soon as he come through the door.

"Alright, and yours?"

"Good, and why do you look conflicted?"

"Because of Emma and Ash, or more importantly what Ash wants me to do. He came to talk to me at the caf   before Rikki's party," I say.

"Okay well, what did he want?" he asks.

"He wants me to trick Emma into meeting him at the Italian caf   at 7 on Wednesday. I told him I'd do it, but I'm having second thoughts," I say.

"Well, why does he want you to bring her there?"

"Because even though he doesn't want to marry her or get back together with her, he brought a promise ring to show that he'll always be there for her and their children."

"Well that sounds great, but I don't think tricking her is the right way to go about this. Why don't you tell her what's going on, I'm sure she'll give him a chance. And you can tell her that if she needs you, we will be right across the restaurant having a nice romantic dinner," Lewis says.

"Okay, that sounds great," I say. "I'll talk to her later."

****A while later****

****Rikki and Zane's place****

****The basement pool****

****Rikki's POV****

After listening to Bella's confession, I told her that she should consider admitting to her dad that she knows the truth, and get a

phone number for her siblings so that she can contact them. Since I know they are here in Australia, I figured that if she really wants to see them, I can tell her the truth that they are actually here.

She didn't seem overly confident that she could work up the nerve to talk to her dad about this. After the last time we all told our parents, and knowing what they did to our siblings, I can understand her hesitation.

Anyways, as soon as she left, with the intent of talking to her dad, I called Lizzie and Jenna and told them to get mom and the other to come to my house so we could talk about them being here. So, here we are, and now it's time to get this show on the road.

"Okay, so obviously we are here to talk about why you girls are really here," I say.

"But before anything I said, it is important that Jenna and I both pressured them into coming here. It went so well for us, we wanted them to be happy, too," Lizzie says.

"Okay that's fair. But why did you come if you don't want to be here?" I ask.

"Well, I do want to be here. After those two left, I started to consider it more and more by the time they told us to come, I was jumping for it," Diana says.

"And I came because Lizzie told me that we might actually have a chance at being a family," my mom says.

"Well, I'm here because I didn't want them to go alone, they don't understand the rejection we faced 15 years ago. I didn't want them to go this alone," Bethany says.

"So, do you actually want to meet them?" I ask.

"Well, I do want to meet Bella and after all the letters and phone calls, I do kind of want to see my dad, but mom I can go without," Bethany says.

"That's good, at least you want to see them," I say.

"You guys didn't tell me, you were talking to your dad," Kelly says sounding a bit mad.

"We didn't want you to feel hurt, it was bad enough that we had a sibling to share this with, but to add the fact that our dad still cared enough to contact us, I thought would hurt you too bad," Bethany says.

"That's because it does hurt that bad. Everyone here has someone who cares about them except me. That's why I didn't want to come. I'll just go back to America and live my life alone," Kelly says.

"Don't do that. I'm sure they care about you, and if you really want to try with Cleo, I'm sure she'll love to meet you," I say.

"You don't understand, I don't want to force myself into her life,

like these guys did, it's not right," Kelly say then gets out of the pool and starts to dry off.

"Where are you going?" Jenna asks.

"I need to be alone," I all she says before walking up the stairs.

"We shouldn't have mentioned the letters and stuff we got from dad," Bethany says to Diana.

"I'm surprised she never found out on her own," Diana replies.

"So, I know you three changed together, but how and when?" I ask.

"Well, it starts with my three best friends. For a few weeks, they started acting weird. Every time I asked, they would change the subject or make an excuse to leave. After about two months of this odd behavior, I was going crazy trying to figure out what changed. I even went so far as to try never leaving them alone so they couldn't talk about whatever it was. They got so angry that they actually screamed at me to leave them alone and ran off. I stupidly ran after them. I was so shocked when they ran into the ocean, and was even more surprised when I went in and saw their tails. Since I knew they had to come back to that spot because it was secluded, I hid and waited," she pauses to take a breather.

"What happened when they came back?" I ask.

"I forced them to tell me everything about them being mermaids. Then I told them that I thought it would be cool to become one. Of course they tried to stop me by saying that there had to be three people to become mermaids."

"So you brought along Diana and Kelly?" I ask.

"Yes, and because my friends had told me that their families were all accepting of their mermaids, I decided to tell our families, and they didn't react the same, obviously," Bethany says.

"So, you purposely became a mermaid and forced two young children to become one, too. Then you threw it in their faces that you changed their children. No wonder Kelly is bitter. At least for us it was an accident, you actually did this to them," I say.

"I know, I know. It' been the biggest mistake of my life, and I've been trying to make up for it ever sense," Bethany say looking truly sorry.

"Now you know the story, you have to help us reconnect, even if it's just with Bella and Cleo," Diana says.

"Well, Bella won't be a hard sell since she already knows about the two of you," I say quietly.

"You told her?" Bethany asks incredulously.

"No, I didn't. I found out today that she's known since she was 11. She just never said anything," I say.

"Why did she say something now?" Diana asks.

"Because of how well it worked out with Lizzie and Jenna for us, I guess that it seems like she's doing the same thing you girls are," I say.

"Okay well, maybe we should wait for her to contact us," Diana says.

"I guess, it that's what you want to do," I say.

"Yah, let her come to us," Bethany says.

****At the beach****

****Cleo's POV****

After talking to Lewis, I realized he was right saying that I should just tell Emma instead of trying to blind slide her. So, I went looking for her. She wasn't at home or work so I thought maybe she went for a swim.

As I head towards the beach, and start thinking about how the water has now not only affected my life, but the life of my child and future children. When we first became mermaids, all we ever thought about were ourselves, and how this would affect our lives, now I realize that it affects so many more.

As I continue thinking about the effects of this on my child, I realize that Emma is probably thinking about it, too, and now she feels alone because of Ash. Hopefully, I can convince her to meet with him on Wednesday.

Suddenly, someone with brown hair runs past me and straight into the water. She must be upset if she didn't realize she just showed a complete stranger her tail. Who is this mermaid? I suppose I should just follow her to find out. I get up and run into the water.

"Wow," I think. Either she's just in a hurry or she's been swimming a long time.

I see her entering the moon pool, and I head there, too. As I break the surface, I hear her muttering, "No one cares about me, every one lies and hides things. Apparently, I just don't matter"

"Are you all right?" I ask her.

"It's none of your business, just leave me alone," she says to the wall then turns to me, opens her mouth, and pauses. "Cleo?"

"Yes, and you are?"

Her attitude seemed to come back, "No one, now leave."

"No, I'm not leaving. Tell me who you are and what'd going on," I say.

"Fine, but surely just looking at the two of us, you can figure out who I am," she says.

"Just tell me," I say.

"I'm Kelly, and my last name is the same as yours so figure it out," Kelly says

"Youâ€¦i..weâ€¦" I stutter.

"Oh gosh, I'm your twin, ding dong," she says.

"Wow, I guess I don't know everything about my family," I say slowly.

"You're telling me," she says.

"So, have you always been around? And why are you upset?" I ask.

"Why do you care? You've lived your whole life without me, and you just met me," Kelly says with an attitude.

"I chased after you, not because I thought you were my sister and I should care, but because I was worried, you ran right passed me and didn't even care that you exposed your secret. It told me that something was seriously wrong, and it didn't matter who you were, I wanted to help," I say.

"Oh yah, because you're just the nice twin," Kelly says sarcastically.

"If that's what you want to believe," I say.

"You can't help me. You haven't been abandoned by your family, lied to be your best friends, and you mom hasn't found you only to tell you that she still doesn't want a fish for a daughter, but it looks like she got stuck with two fishes so I should go back home. As if that solves anything. And it wasn't like she was apologizing," Kelly says.

"But I can help with dad and Sam. And I can offer you a sister that would love to get to know you. There's also a little niece or nephew inside me that would love another aunt. Hopefully, you're better than Kim will be," I say jokingly.

"Look, I appreciate you wanting to help, but now that I'm here it just doesn't feel right. I came here for the wrong reasons, and even though it sounds nice to have a family, but it'll be forced and it'll be too late," Kelly says.

"What makes you say that?" I ask.

"I have too many problems that cause me to hate everything to do with my 'family'," Kelly says.

"But in all honesty, it's not my fault or Kim's. We didn't tell mom and dad to get away from you," I say.

"It doesn't matter, now leave me alone," Kelly says.

"Fine, I will, but think about. Just give it a chance," I say before

turning and leaving.

****Walking along the street****

****Bella's POV****

After talking to the girls, I decided to tell my dad the truth. Of course I had to check that my mom wasn't home. Since she's responsive for not only kicking me out (because of the baby), but kicking my sister's out. So, I have to talk to my dad alone. I felt confident about telling my dad the truth, until I find myself at the front door. Can I really do this?

Can I tell my dad everything? As I continue to question whether or not I could do this, I suddenly find myself facing my dad.

"Bella, what are you doing standing out here alone?" my dad asks.

"I came to see you while mom's not around," I say.

"Well come in, then. I saw someone standing at the door, so I came to see who it was," he says.

"Thanks, I'm just nervous about what I need to tell you," I say.

"You can tell me anything honey," he says.

"I want you to be honest with me. Do I have sisters?" I ask.

He looks down, "Yes, you do. How did you find out?"

"That's the thing I have to tell you. I found out a couple years after a big change happened in my life," I say.

"What change?" he asks slowly.

"This one," I say before pouring a glass of water over my hand. "Dad, I'm a mermaid just like your other daughters."

13. Should I?

A/N hey guys, sorry for the wait life has been a little overwhelming for me, and unlike the first try at this story and my last story I wrote at least chapters ahead and right now I'm only at a half a chapter ahead so it is taking me a lot longer, but please stick with me. READ and REVIEW byes

****Chapter 12: Should I? ****

****At the cafe ****

****Emma's POV****

After Bella's announcement, and I walked out, I decided to go for a swim. While I was swimming, I realized that I shouldn't have spazzed out on her like that. If I was her, I probably would have done the same thing. I mean she kept the secret because even though her dad realized his mistake, and regretted it there is a reason why they

never came home. So, I headed back to the café. Maybe it was because I wanted to run into her or maybe I'm avoiding her, either way here I am at the café.

Suddenly, Cleo comes in looking a little bit flustered. Then she turns and sees me. Of course she heads over to me and I wonder what's up.

"Emma, can I talk to you?" she asks.

"Of course," I say.

She sits down and pauses before she begins. "Ash came to talk to me on Rikki's birthday. He wants me to convince you to come to the Italian restaurant on Wednesday to meet with him. He thinks that tricking you is the only way to get you to talk to him. I decided to tell you because I think you should go at it with an open mind. I mean I understand that he's walked out on you twice, but he wants to make a promise to you, and maybe he'll stick with it." she continues to ramble until I say, "Cleo, stop."

"Sorry."

"It's alright. Honest. If he wants to talk to me, he should've come to me. But I understand he's thought process. Anyways, should I?" I ask.

"I think you should," she says.

"Why should I? He wanted you to trick me into talking to him," I say.

"Because he could really mean the promise, and it could be a good thing for you and your kids," Cleo says.

"I just don't know, he seems to be going about this the wrong way."

"Just give him one more shot. If you need me, Lewis and I will be right across the restaurant," Cleo says.

"Okay, I guess I'll go."

****At the moon pool****

****No POV****

Kelly actually felt bad after Cleo left. Ever since she was four and was sent away, she's been on her own, and felt alone so whenever someone seemed to care she pushed them away. The only people she wouldn't push were the ones she lived with, but even they left her alone sometimes. After pulling herself onto the sand, she layed down on her back so she wouldn't have to look at the thing that she hates right now.

She begins to wonder if it's her. If the reason her life never seems to be going well.

Suddenly, Diana swims in. "Kelly!" she yells.

"What are you doing here?" Kelly asks.

"I'm here to talk again," Diana says.

"So talk."

"Okay, first off, we are sorry for not telling you that our dad wants us back, but we didn't leave you and we won't leave you. Second, I think you should give your family a chance. We just found out that Bella has known about us for 7 years, and she has decided now to find us. At least Cleo hasn't ignored you. And finally, I know you hate being a mermaid, but there's nothing we can do about it," Diana says.

"Fine, you're sorry, but that doesn't change my feelings about it. And I did talk to Cleo, and there's no reason to change her up now," Kelly says rolling her eyes.

"Just give her a chance, we could be happy here," Diana says.

"Why should I? I don't want to stay here," Kelly says.

"What if things work out? You'll never know if you don't try. Give her a call," Diana says.

"Fine, but I will figure out how to get rid of this," pointing to her tail, "And I'm still mad at the two of you," she says before pulling herself towards the water and going under.

****At the Hartley's****

****Bella's POV****

A few minutes after I changed in front of my dad, it was silent then, "I knew this was going to happen," he says.

"How did you know?"

"I just figured that after the other two became mermaids that you were destined for it. That's why we sent them away. We thought if we put distance between you three your chances of turning into one would be gone, or at least slim. It took me a few years to realize that distance didn't matter," my dad says.

"Why didn't the distance matter?" I ask.

"Because destiny doesn't care about distance. I knew about when you became a mermaid, and it made me realize that we never had any control over it. That's when I realized we never should have sent them away," my dad says.

"How did you know? What did you do?" I ask.

"When you started acting differently, I wondered about it. I even asked your mother if she was seeing the changes I was seeing. She said no, but that I should stop thinking about that because she worked so hard to forget. I didn't want to forget. I felt horrible doing that to them. Even though we picked out a nice apartment for them, and sent them money every month until Bethany's 18th birthday. Then we cut her off so to speak. Two years later, I started

suspecting that you had changed," he pauses.

"Andâ€¦" I say pushing him to finish.

"So, I tried to get back in touch with them. Because I knew that if you had changed, it would be okay to bring them back. So, I wrote letters saying how sorry I was, and inviting them back home. It took months, and finally a picture of you as a mermaid to get a response."

"Wait, you have a picture of me as a mermaid?" I ask.

"Yes, once I was suspecting that you had changed, I started to try to catch you. Obviously, you were careful around water, so I had to take any chance I could to follow you. I soon realized that I couldn't spend all my time following you because of work and I'm just not that good. so, that summer, I had your cousin, Shawn, follow you. I told him what I thought had happened to you, and that he was to take pictures of you when he could and if he did get any of you as a mermaid he was to bring them directly to me. It took a few weeks, but he managed it. I kept some of them, but the sent the others to Bethany, hoping it would convince her to talk to me," he says then hands me a letter.

_Dear dad, _

Although I understand that Bella has actually changed, and you feel like we could help her, that's no reason for us to come back. You should have known better. I had to figure things out on my own, and so should she. She should consider herself lucky at least you didn't kick her out.

-Bethany

"Wow, I guess she felt extremely hurt by you only looking out for me," I say.

"But I cared about her, too," he says.

"No, you didn't. if you had cared about her, you wouldn't have waited until I turned into one before you apologized. Suddenly, because you couldn't stop your last daughter from becoming one, you're just going to make up with them? It doesn't seem like you care, just that you felt bad that you weren't going to kick me out, but you had already kicked them out so you wanted to make up for it," I say.

"Well, at least I didn't try to continue to ignore them," he says.

"But to her it looked like you were obligated to something," I say.

"I guess. Anyways, after that letter I became discouraged, but I did keep trying. Eventually, I got them to talk to me, and start to repair that relationship, but they didn't want to risk coming here. That and they feared us, especially your mom, and not to mention they were worried about you. All in all, it took a while, but it happened, and now that you know we should call them," my dad says.

"Will you be with me when I do?" I ask.

"Of course, why don't we call right now?" my dad asks.

"Okay." I say nervously.

****At Rikki and Zane's place****

****Rikki's POV****

Diana had left about a half hour ago to go after Kelly, but the rest of us had just stayed and hung out. We were just talking about Bella talking to her dad about her sisters, and when they would likely get a call.

Suddenly a phone rings, and we all jump. Bethany, who was already dried off, found that it was her phone and says, "My dad's calling."

"Well, answer it," I say.

"I don't knowâ€¦"

"Come on it's probably Bella," I say.

She looks at the phone again before answering it, "Dad?" she puts the phone on speaker so we can all hear.

"Yes, it's me, and actually I have someone who wants to get to know you," he says.

Then Bella speaks up, "I know it's a little late, but I'm Bella and I'd really like to be a real sister to you, and Diana. Is she with you?"

"Um, no she's not. She's actually off exploring, it's been a while since we've been on an island," Bethany says hinting that they are here, and avoiding saying anything about Kelly.

"Which island are you on?" their dad asks.

"Your island. We came back, dad," Bethany says.

"You finally came back and didn't tell me?" he asks.

"We didn't know how," she says.

"It's alright. Why don't we get together at the end of the week?" their dad suggests.

"Sounds good, just let us know. Call our cells or the hotel," Bethany says.

"Good, we will let you know."

****Wednesday****

****Emma and Bella's apartment****

****5:30pm****

****Emma's POV****

Cleo's on her way to get ready for tonight. We already know what we are going to wear, but she's going to do my hair and makeup and vice versa. I have to say that I'm nervous. I know what he wants, and I'm still not sure what to do. I look down at my pregnant belly, and I think I have to do what is best for my babies.

Knock Knock.

I open the door to see Cleo already dressed in her favorite purple dress that hides her belly pretty well. I can't hide my belly, but I have two to her one, and I'm almost two months further along. She's only about three months now so it is easy to make it seem like she just added a few pounds. Not that she even looks like that.

I welcome her in, and she helps me put on my favorite loose light blue dress, and then starts to do my hair.

"Cleo, I'm nervous," I say.

"Don't be. You know what he wants, and you have the right to say no, but you have to give him the chance to defend his reasons. You can say no," she replies.

"I'm not sure I can. When I think about all the stuff he said to be, I want to scream and yell about how horrible he is, but I know that once I look into his eyes all that anger is going to disappear," I say.

We switch places before she answers. "Maybe, that is a good thing. Maybe it's a sigh that your kids are going to need a father figure. Besides, we will help you too."

"I guess you are right. One last chance," I say as we get up to leave.

We leave and walk the short distance to the restaurant in silence. As we turn and the restaurant comes into view, Cleo stops and looks at me. "Remember that he doesn't know that you know what he wants, just that you are coming, so at least let him talk. Also, if you need anything Lewis and I will be right across the restaurant."

"Okay," I say and we continue walking.

Before I know it, I am walking through the door, saying goodbye to Cleo, and walking towards Ash, and I think 'Am I ready for this?'

****Cleo's POV****

I said good bye to Emma, and walked to where Lewis sat waiting. He gets up to get my chair, and kiss me hello before we sit down.

"How was your day?" he asks.

"Good, and yours?" I ask.

"Alright, looking forward to tonight," he says.

"Why? I haven't missed an anniversary or anything, have I?" I ask because I really am curious as to why I am here.

"No, no anniversary or anything else. I just thought we could talk about us, and the baby and our life together," Lewis says.

"Okay, so where do we start, and why here?" I ask.

"I wanted this to be a nice dinner out just the two of us."

"And we start here," Lewis says taking out a jewelry box, and bending on one knee.

"I love you, I love our baby, and there is no reason to wait a moment longer. Will you marry me?" he asks looking into my eyes.

If we were this young, and I wasn't pregnant, I probably would have hesitated, but I knew this is the right thing to do for our baby.

"Yes, I love you too," I say and he slips his ring onto my finger, and we kiss.

"I'm glad you said yes. Of course I had no doubt, but that's why I wanted to come out tonight," he says.

"You now we are going to have a lot of planning to do in the next few months," I say smiling.

"Well, we are worth it," he says, and we start to talk about the wedding and the baby.

****Emma's POV****

As I headed towards the table, Ash got up to get my chair and try to hug me, but I shook my head no. I sit down, and as he sits across from me he says, "Emma you look great, I'm glad you came."

"Thanks, but let's get to why I'm here," I say. "I don't have time for 'small talk'."

"Okay, I get it. Look I'm sorry that I have failed you, but if you give me one last chance I will be with you every step of the way. Any time day or night I'll be there for you and the twins," he says.

"Where's your proof? You've said that before," I say.

"I bought a ring. Not an engagement ring, but a promise ring," he says.

"You are going to promise to marry me one day? That's your promise? And if it was an engagement ring, I'd slap you and walk away. You flat out said that you didn't love me," I say angrily.

"No, it's not a marriage promise. It's a promise that I won't leave you to have kids on your own. I promise to be a good father, and a good friend. I know that friends don't usually have kids, but I can't be more than that right now. Maybe in time, but we need to focus on our twins," Ash says.

I think about what he is saying as the waiter takes our order before responding, "I understand what you are saying, but that doesn't change what has happened or that I can't trust you. No object can prove your loyalty to me. If you really mean it, you are going to have to show it."

"How?" he asks.

"By being there for me every day. I shouldn't have to tell you. Be a good boyfriend even if you aren't one," I say.

"Uh okay, then I'll try. I'll do whatever you need. I'll be there for you," Ash says.

"I'll hold you to that, but just know that I expect you to be proving your word to me for a while. Just giving me a ring isn't going to just magically make me believe youâ€|"

"So, will you accept this ring as a symbol for me?"

14. Too Much Planning

A/N hey guys, I'm sorry it takes me so long, but here it is, and let me know what you think

****Chapter 13: Too Much Planning****

****6 weeks later****

****At Emma and Bella's apartment****

****Bella's POV****

Ash and Will are helping move the baby cribs in today. Even though Emma doesn't find out until her appointment later what her kid's genders are. Not knowing hasn't stopped her from shopping and buying things for them, as she claims that there are some things that work for both boys and girls. She even went so far as to have the boys paint our children's bedroom a light blue, figuring that even if they are girls they will like blue, and if there is a boy in the group, he wouldn't have to deal with a pick bedroom. She said that we needed to have to nursery done in case the babies came early, and since she doesn't believe Lewis's method of finding out will work, and it'll still be two weeks at least before I could find out, so she said we should go ahead and paint it. I guess if worse comes to worse, we could easily repaint it when our kids start to complain. Anyways, I'm glad the boys have been helpful, although I am still in the dark about why Emma accepted Ash's promise ring. On one hand, he is trying, since he had been here every day doing everything he can to make it up to her, but on the other hand, I feel like she's setting herself up to fall. It was her choice, and she seems to have made the right decision since he actually has been trying, but who knows if it'll last?

Anyways, the boys won't let us help since we are too far along, so Emma and I are sitting on the couch. I know she would rather be deciding how to best set up the things in the room. She actually tried, but Will told her that she needed to relax. But instead of

relaxing, she starts freaking out about school, and maybe I think it is time for a swim.

"Emma, why don't we go for a swim?" I ask.

"Because I don't have time for a swim," she replies.

"Come on, it'll be good for you, and then I'll go with you to your doctor appointment," I say.

"Fine, but you don't have to go with me to the doctor," she says.

"Okay."

We say goodbye to the boys, and head out the door. On the way to the beach, we see Bethany and Diana and we wave, but don't stop. Even though we are friends and working on being sisters, right now Emma needs me more, and besides we don't have to talk every time we see each other.

It's kind of like a work in progress. We want to be sisters and act like a family, but we don't want to push so hard. We need to become friends first.

We reach the water, and neither one of us hesitates to go right in.

****At Rikki and Zane's Place****

****Rikki's POV****

At 6 months pregnant all I want to do is sit, but Zane wants me to help choose the rooms for the babies. We figured that unless we had more kids (not that either of us want more, we're not even sure we could handle these two) that they would each get their own rooms. We also decided that we should wait to see what they are before decorating the rooms.

Lewis seems to believe that we can use our power to not change and project it on to our babies, so that they will become human despite the water surrounding them. Emma seems to believe that's not possible, but she is going to try it today. I have my appointment in a few days, but first, we have to get Lizzie and Jenna out of our house.

They both decided to go to college ere in Australia, but it is slow going getting things to a normal way of life. Lizzie and I get along great, and I'm glad she'll be going to college with me next year, but I feel like suddenly she has to be included in everything. So, I talked to her about it, and she agreed that her and Jenna should get their own place. Both found jobs by the school and applied for the next year, so that they can get set.

My mom on the other hand has talked to dad, but is having trouble going whole heartily into something that broke her heart once. She did agree to start over, though. Like go out on dates, and pretend the past didn't exist. Except for us of course Lizzie says that mom doesn't want to jump whole heartily into it in case she got burned unlike Lizzie who only does things whole heartily. Anyways, mom and

dad seem to be doing well. Dad mentioned getting an apartment opposed to staying in our trailer.

Anyways, Zane doesn't want me to work as much as I have no energy to work. He worries that it is bad for our twins, but despite being tired all the time I told him I have to work so that he can focus on school and relax because in 3 months we won't have time for that. So, I'm headed to the café to run things for a few hours, which includes meeting with Cleo for the plan of her reception.

In 6 weeks, she got almost everything done. The wedding is at Mako with us and Kim as bridesmaids and the reception is at the café. I'm meeting with her to decide on food and entertainment. Bella said she would sing, but what about for the breaks, and letting her enjoy some of the night, too. Plus the decorations, and stuff, but I suppose that's Emma's job as maid of honor. I still remember the day Cleo chose her.

****Flashback****

Bella and I were relaxing in my pool when Cleo and Emma come in.

"So girls, I have an important decision to make about my wedding," Cleo says as she slides into the pool.

"Okay, what is it?" I ask.

"I have to choose my maid of honor, but before I say who I have chosen I want to tell you all how much you mean to me."

"Emma, you have been my best friend since I was so young I can't even remember a time without you as my friend. You've always been there for me, and I missed you like crazy the year you were gone."

"Bella, I've only know you for a year, but that year feels like so many more with how close we became in this past year."

"Rikki, I've known you for a few years now. We got through so much together, and I'm glad that day in the moon pool happened bringing you to be my friend."

"Now even though we've all been through a lot, and you are all my best friends. Only one of you has been here all my life. So, Emma, will you be my maid of honor?"

"Of course," Emma replies.

And then we all celebrated.

****End of flashback****

I guess I felt like it should've been me, but I guess I see her point. At least we are all included. The guys aren't because of the number of brothers Lewis has. It's probably better that way, anyway.

I go into the office to do some paperwork before Cleo gets here.

****At Cleo's family's house****

****Cleo's POV****

I was talking to Sam and Kim about the wedding and my fitting for my wedding dress, when my phone rings. I like at it, and don't recognize the number, so I get up and walk away before answering.

"Hello?"

"Cleo? Hi, it's um Kelly," she says hesitantly.

"Kelly? Hi, uh what's up?" I ask not sure if I want to know.

"Over the past 6 weeks, I've been waiting on not being so angry and actually waiting to know my family. So, I was wondering if we could meet up sometimes?" she asks.

"Uh, sure I guess. Just you and me or do you want me to bring dad and Kim?" I ask.

"No, let this just be us."

"Okay, where?"

"The coffee shop down the road?" she suggests.

"Coffee isn't good for the baby," I say.

"Um, is the cafÃ© safe?" she asks.

"Yes, why don't you come by in an hour. I hate to talk to Rikki about the reception first," I say.

"Okay, see you there."

****No POV****

Unknown to Cleo she wasn't the only one to have heard this plan to meet with Kelly. She didn't know that before long their secret would be out, and everything would change.

****At the cafÃ©****

****Rikki's POV****

As I finish some of the paperwork, there is a knock at the door.

"Come in," I say.

It's Lizzie.

"Hey, sorry to bother you, but there's some woman outside, who thought I was you, is here," she says.

"Okay, send her in. And I'm sorry you got mistaken for me," I say.

"It's alright," she says turning to go get the woman.

Before I even see this woman, I hear her say, "So, you really are still here?"

I look up to see that the voice belongs to Sophie. "Of course I am, it's my café."

"I was told that you'd be gone by now."

"By who?" I ask.

"Charlotte, she told me if I waited long enough that you girls would gone," Sophie says glaring at me like I'm invading her office.

"Well, she lied. We aren't going anywhere," I say.

"We'll see about that," she says.

"There's nothing you can do," I say.

"Well, I could always steal Zane from you, that's all I really want," Sophie replies.

"Oh yah, how do you plan on doing that?" I ask as if I really care.

"I'll tell him the truth about your "baby"," she says putting air quotes around baby.

"What truth?" I ask.

"That there is no baby, you are faking it," she says.

Instead of responding, I get up and pull up my shirt to reveal my belly as I approach her. Placing her hand on my stomach, I ask, "Now tell me that you don't believe I'm really pregnant."

At first, it looked like she was going to stick to her story, but then she felt it. A kick. She changed her mind," Fine, I guess you are, but it's definitely not his. How can it be? Those last few months you were barely together, it was like you guys really weren't, and then magically you get back together, and uh oh you're pregnant. It just seems too unreal to me," Sophie finishes.

I'm suddenly at a loss for words when Lizzie comes back in to tell me that Cleo's here. I go to tell Sophie to leave, but she cuts me off.

"I'll see myself out, but don't worry you'll be seeing me again."

Lizzie just looks at me, and I tell her that I'll be out in a minute.

****At the moon pool****

****Emma's POV****

Bella keeps talking on and on about how exciting it is to find out

about the babies. I, however, can't think about anything besides Ash. It just seems so odd to have him actually care about these kids.

After his initial reaction, he had apologized and I forgave him, but he still didn't show even a ten percent interest in the babies. I mean if I brought them up, he would pretend to be happy, but there was always that feeling like he never really was. Now he's suddenly super interested, wanting to be with me every second of every day. It just seems so fake, and I can't get my mind off of it.

I think that's why I tried to throw myself into prepping for the babies, but maybe Bella could tell, and wanted me to relax.

Suddenly, I see fingers snapping in front of my face.

"What?" I ask.

"Have you been listening to me?" Bella asks.

"Of course," I say.

"Seriously, Emma, what's the matter?"

I hesitate, thinking maybe I should tell her, but then I decide against it. Everyone else is happy with the father of their children, and can't bring on more drama in their lives.

"Nothing, I have to get to the doctor," I say before diving underwater.

It took me practically no time to get to the beach and even less to get to the doctor's office. Before I know it the nurse is calling me in, and I have to concentrate on staying human. It took me five minutes to realize that I actually managed to do it, and the doctor was talking to me.

"â€| you see there? That shows that this one is a girl, and now if we shift we can see that the other is also a girl, so it looks like you are having twin girls. Congratulations."

****Back at the moon pool****

****Bella's POV****

I knew Emma was bothered by something before, but now I realize that it must be something serious. However, I knew better than to follow her, so I swim around for a while when I see another mermaid with reddish-brown hair, and didn't look familiar, I decide to follow her.

I thought she would go into the moon pool, but she headed for the beach. I look to the beach to see if there, she would head there, when I see none other than Ash.

My first thoughts were what? So, I swim closer, and see as the mermaid pulls

"Sorry, I'm late, but these random meetings make it difficult to get

away," the mermaid says.

"I'm sorry, but you know why that is," Ash replies.

"We've been dating for two months, weeks before she gave you a second chance. Not to mention the fact that I'm the reason you are bothering to care for your kids. A normal girlfriend wouldn't encourage you to spend time with your pregnant ex. So, just tell her," the mermaid finishes as she turns into a human.

"I know, I know, but I don't know how to tell her about you, Melanie. It could break her heart," he says.

I decide that I've heard enough, and turn to leave. What do I do now?

****At the cafÃ©****

****Cleo's POV****

Sitting at the first booth, I watch as Sophie leaves the office with some strange smile on her face. Rikki follows about a minute later, and sits across from me like she didn't just see the person who's trying to steal the love of her life.

"So, Cleo, what have you and Lewis decided for the meal for the reception?"

"Uh yah, we decided on a family style. Are you alright?"

"Of course, so is there anything else? Like free reign on juices and stuff?"

"Well, I guess. You wouldn't suggest having to limit juice choices, would you? And seriously, Sophie just walked out of your office with a smirk on her face," I say.

"Well, it would make it simpler to limit drinks, but it's your choice. And don't worry I can deal with her," she says.

"Let's just have people have all the choices, and seriously tell me what's up,"

>I say.<p>

"Just stop. It's my problem. Now are we done?" she asks.

"Yes, and if you need anythingâ€¦" I say leaving my sentence for her to finish.

"I know, I know. I'll call," she says before getting up to leave.

I sit there for a few minutes trying to figure things out, when Kelly sits across from me with a smile on her face.

"Cleo, I'm so glad you answered and came," she says with a smile.

"Wow, you seem so different since we first met, and I must say I came because I was curious. So, what is it you wanted to talk to me about?" I ask.

"Well, first I want to apologize for my attitude towards you and our family. Second, all that hatred I used to have is going to go away. I won't be resentful anymore," she says with a smile.

"That's great, but why are you suddenly okay with everything?" I ask.

"Oh that's right, I didn't tell you the best part. There is a way to become normal again, and we could be a normal happy family!"

"What do you mean normal?" I ask.

"I found a way for us not to be mermaids anymore."

A/N So, what do you think? Sophie's back, and Ash has a new girlfriend? What about the chance for them to become normal. Tell me how you feel** by the way are my chapters too long? Too short? Or just the right length? Please let me know and I hope you enjoyed this**

15. Choices

Chapter 14: Choices

At the café

No POV

While Cleo sat in shock at her sister's words, her other sister sat in hiding in the booth behind them. Kim could not believe her ears. Cleo and the girl who looks like her are related and mermaids? After making Kim look like a fool before, she would need proof now. After figuring out she needed proof, she left before Kelly could explain some more.

"What do you mean we won't be mermaids anymore?" Cleo asks.

"Well, the reason that it took me 6 weeks to contact you is because I was going research. As you know, I can't stand having a tail because it reminds me of the reason I can't be with my family, and obviously makes me hate you guys for sending me away. So, since I ran into you, I decided to find a way to be normal again. And I found a way. There is a special moon that comes every time we get a new queen or every ten years, if we don't get a new queen. This special moon sticks around for three months after the changing of queens or one month if there is not a changing. This special moon will take away our powers forever or should we decide that we don't like being normal, we could jump in the pool on the next full moon, and become exactly as we were before. It's only the full moon after though," she says all this very fast.

"Whoa," Cleo says.

"What do you think?" Kelly asks.

"I don't know what to think. On one hand, it sounds great, but you realize that just because you change back it won't erase the memories. It won't take us back in time, and replace all those years

you felt abandoned," Cleo says.

"But it'll be better because I won't have a constant reminder that I lost all those years with you," Kelly says.

"I get that, but now you can look at it as a way to relate to me and have a special bond with me," Cleo says.

"I don't think you understand. There's so much more involved. Look maybe I should show you some things, but I have to go to where I'm staying to get them," Kelly says.

"That's fine. I just think we need to talk this through. When is the next full moon anyways?" Cleo asks.

"Next Friday," Kelly says.

"As in the day before my wedding, next Friday?" Cleo asks.

"Yes, but just think, you could be normal on your wedding day," Kelly replies.

"I don't know."

"Let me show you what I have to show you first. So you want me to come by your house? We don't have to, I just thoughtâ€¦"

Cleo cuts her off, "Yes, I'll meet you at my house."

Cleo then explains the directions to her house, and they plan to meet back up within the hour.

After the two left Rikki comes out of the office to get Lizzie.

"Hey Lizzie, I'm going to go for a walk could just stay here until I come back?" Rikki asks.

"Sure. Do you want me to call anyone to come cover for you since I don't technically work here?" Lizzie asks.

"No, it's fine. I'll be back shortly."

****Rikki's POV****

As I walk out of the cafÃ©, I'm not even sure why I wanted to go for a walk. I just know I need time to think. Maybe Sophie could be right. Not that he is not the father, but that she could tell him the same thing she told me, and that could cause him to question me.

What if he believes her? What if he decided to leave me? Or her figures that I'm just trying to trap him or something, and decided that whether they are his or not, he's going to leave me? To be honest, just hearing her say it like that made me feel like questioning things myself. I have to keep her away from him.

I suddenly find myself at the beach, and I start to think about how it has become automatic to come here for peace. I start to test some of my new powers, and I realize that my twins will have the same powers. I also start to realize that they will never be normal. They

won't even have a chance to be normal. I love being a mermaid, but is it fair to my kids that they never get a choice?

"No choices," I mumble out loud to myself.

"That's wrong, my dear," a voice says behind me.

I jump and look around. It's Mrs. C. "How can I be wrong if you don't know what I'm thinking about?" I ask.

"You are thinking that your children won't have a choice, they'll just be stuck as mermaids, but that's a lie. Therefore you are wrong," she says.

"No, that's not true. The 50 year moon only passed about two years ago, so really they will be stuck being mermaids for 48 years so yes, they are stuck," I say.

"Ah you have so many things yet to learn. So many things about the mermaid world," she replies.

"What don't I know about the mermaid world?" I ask.

"Well, as you know, I thought I gave up my powers in the 50 year moon, yet I'm still a mermaid. Charlotte, too, lost her powers in during the last 50 year moon, but she could have gained them back. Why?" she says obviously wanting me to figure it out.

"It's not forever, but it's meant to feel that way. We are meant to believe that it's forever, when we could easily get it back on another full moon," I say slowly.

"Exactly, which also leads to something else, is there only one moon that can take away your powers?" she asks.

"I want to say yes, but the way you said it makes me feel like there's more than one," I say.

"The truth is that between every 50 year moon there are 4 other moons that can take your powers," she says.

"Really? Why, and how come you didn't tell us?" I ask.

"Since you became queen, it came early. You see, it happens every time the queen changes as well as every ten years. On the 50 year moon, I is just extra strong. Although, it doesn't make much of a difference," Mrs. C. says.

"So, there is a moon coming up for it?" I ask.

"Yes, and technically, the rules state that you can give it all up, and if you are unhappy being human, then jump back in on the next full moon," she says.

"And that's the only time you can?" I ask.

"No, that's just what the rule for those moons say," she says.

"So, if it was given up, we could go back to it anytime?" I ask.

"Exactly," she says before waving good bye and disappearing.

After a few minutes, I realize something. I wouldn't even consider giving it up, not for me anyways. My next thought was I need to tell the girls.

****The soon to be McCartney's place****

****Cleo's POV****

I went home wondering what I should do with this new information about the moon. I mean truthfully, every time that we've been faced with the possibility of losing everything we've fought to keep them, so why would I want to give them up. I wonder if Kelly has really thought this through. Or if she wants to be accepted so much, she doesn't care anymore?

I wonder if she even remembers being human? A day that she didn't have to worry? A day that she didn't have to lie or make up excuses?

Knock Knock.

"Come in," I say knowing it's her. She's carrying a box in her arms, and sets it down on the floor by me. She then proceeds to sit next to me on the couch.

"What's all this?" I ask.

"These are letters to you. Since I learned to read and write, I have been writing a letter to you at least once a week. At first, I had every intention of sending them to you, but once I realized how abandoned I really was it turned into a diary-type things," she says solemnly.

"I'm sorry. I would've written you back. We could've gotten to know each other, and worked together to convince our parents you weren't bad," I say.

"I want you to read them," she says.

"All of them? Now?" I ask.

"No, but you should read the first one and last one."

"Okay," I say picking up the one numbered 1, and dated some twelve years previous.

Dear Cleo,****

Hi Cleo, how are you? I know it's been a few years, and I'm not really sure if mom and dad ever mention me, but I'm your sisterâ€|your twin sister. In case they didn't mention it to you, you are probably going "what is this?" and I'm sorry if that's the case. Anyways, I really want to get to know you even if I was sent away because I turn into a mermaid when I touch water (which is totally awesome by the way), but shhhâ€|you can't tell anyone. You have to keep it a secret. Tell everyone hi from America, and I love and miss them even if they did send me away. ****

**Please write back soon.**

**Always,**

**Kelly**

"You don't sound upset or angry at all. You even sound happy," I say.

"That's because I believed the lies about how this was better for me. Better for all of us," Kelly says.

"So, what changed and when?" I ask.

"I tried to get Bethany to mail the letters to you, and she said she would. So, every week I'd write you a letter and give it to her. I knew it would take a while to mail the letters to Australia so I didn't question not getting a reply until about 6 months later. I figured that even if you were busy by then you would have found time to answer. So, I went to Bethany to ask the reason she thought you could be not answering, but I never got to ask," Kelly says.

Flashback

_Little Kelly walks towards the kitchen of their apartment intending to find out why her sister wouldn't answer her letters. She stopped just outside the door when she heard voices talking about her.

_

"â€|_I just don't want her to get hurt. I'm doing this for her," Bethany says._

_ "Are you really thinking about her, knowing you are keeping those letters?" Mary Beth asks._

_ "Yes, who else would I be thinking of," Bethany says._

_ "I don't know, maybe yourself? Maybe Diana? But definitely not Kelly. How do you think she feels right now? It's been months of nothingâ€|and all those letters are really just sitting in your closet," Mary Beth answers._

_ "It's what is best for her! She won't have to go through the heartache of being told they don't love or care about her anymore," Bethany says._

_ "You never know people change," Mary Beth says._

_ Little Kelly had heard enough, her family didn't care and why? Because she was different._

End of Flashback

"I know I said to read the first and last letters, but maybe you should read the one I wrote that day," Kelly says.

I open the letter that she indicated, it was marked with a number 24, and it said.

**Cleo,**

**It's Kelly, I know you'll never get this. You'll never get any of them, but I got some things to say, and maybe one day if I die I can have someone send all these letters to you. **

**I'm unhappy, and you want to know why? Well, first because my real family apparently hates me because I'm a fish, and then come to find out my adopted family, the people I live with that just like me, I can't even trust them.**

**Bethany thinks that she is protecting me, but I think she's just jealous that I'm willing to try. If only I knew how to become normal again. Do you think that would love me again?**

**Anyways, I guess you are more of a dairy now since I feel better after writing thisâ€¦I'm talking to an imaginary person that I'll never meet againâ€¦**

**-Kelly**

"Wow," is all I can manage, but Kelly doesn't say anything just hands me the last letter. Number 624.

**Dear Cleo,**

**Our mom came to visit me yesterday. This is the first time I've seen her since I was four years oldâ€¦and you know what she says? That I should go back to Australia to help you. She admitted that she was the one that couldn't stand having a fish for a daughter, but that dad didn't exactly fight her on it. **

**I guess mom and dad got a divorce because she came to see me, and another man was with her. Apparently, he convinced her that she needed to make amends with me. Not that it matters, but her idea of making amends sucks.**

**She told me that you are a mermaid, too. Actually, she had the nerve to tell me that I should go back and help you. I'm sorry, but that's not going to happen unless I managed to get rid of this thing I call a tail, I would never be accepted ever if you are one, too. **

**I will find a way to become normal.**

**-Kelly**

"I was dragged along to come here before I found my way out of this situation, but now I am ready to get rid of the constant reminder that I am not enough," Kelly says.

"You are enough, I can't believe mom said that to you, but then again we didn't get a warning before she left us. Kelly, do you hate being a mermaid just because you don't like it or just because it reminds you of what you lost?" I ask.

"I think I would love being a mermaid if I was accepted by our family, but I feel like mom proved that what I feel is true," Kelly says.

I start to answer when my phone vibrates. It was a text from Rikki.

****Meet at Mako.****

I look up at Kelly, and say, "I'm sorry, I think Rikki needs me, but maybe we should get together on Tuesday, and we could just talk about being mermaids, and make the right choice regarding this full moon. Sound good?"

"Sure," Kelly says before getting up and waving good bye.

****At the moon pool****

****Bella's POV****

After seeing what I saw, I thought about going home, and telling Emma, but then I thought should I really tell her? I found that I do my best thinking while swimming so I kept swimming around Mako and debating with myself.

Do I tell her now, and risk them getting into another fight and her on her own again? Or do I tell him to make the choice to tell her? His new girlfriend seemed adamant that he should tell Emma the truth, and on that side of things, she did seem to care about Emma's situation telling ash that he should help her.

Suddenly, I see a flash of red, and think "Rikki?" So, I head over in her direction, which was the moon pool.

"What's up, Rikki, you look like you are or were in a hurry," I say as soon as I pop up.

"Oh good, you are here. I learned something important I want to share with you girls," she says.

I start to say that I found something out about Ash, but I stop as Cleo and Emma swim in.

"Alright, now that you are all here, there's something important I have to tell you about the next full moon," Rikki says.

Before she can continue, Cleo says, "We can lose our powers if we want."

"How did you know?" Rikki asks.

"Kelly finally wanted to talk to me. She said that she found a way that we could be a normal family again. By giving it up, and choosing to ignore the past," Cleo responds.

"Wow, uh does she know that she could get it back as well," Rikki says.

"Yes, but only the month after," Cleo says.

"That's not true. Let me tell you what Mrs. C. told me today," Rikki says.

She then goes on to explain what Mrs. C. told her today, and how she's been thinking about this.

"I'm not going to do it, but I will tell my kids when it comes around again so that they could make the choice themselves," she finishes.

Silence meets her admission before I speak, "I agree. I can't go even a few months without my tail. I was meant to be a mermaid, and I don't want to change that."

"But we could get it back at any time?" Emma asks.

"Yes," Rikki says.

"I think I'm going to have to consider this. I don't want to force my daughters to be mermaids," Emma says.

"I think so, too. We need to spend time thinking about this," Cleo says.

"Okay, and they are girls, Emma?" I ask.

"Yes," she replies.

Congrats all around before we decide to talk about this some more, and take our leave.

16. Is it True?

Chapter 15: Is it true?

****A few days later****

****At Cleo and Lewis' house****

****No POV****

Kelly is sitting on the couch, waiting for Cleo to get home. Lewis comes back into the living room with a glass of Lemonade and a straw, and hands it to Kelly.

"Thanks, sorry I'm so early. I thought Cleo was supposed to be home by now. We were going to talk some more about being mermaids and this full moon," Kelly says.

"Well, we can talk about it, too. I tried to learn as much as I could about the girls. Cleo took it very hard, so I thought if I could help I would," Lewis says.

"Cleo wasn't happy to be a mermaid?" Kelly asks.

"Oh no, she was afraid of water, and as soon as she found out, she kept saying that she wasn't one of those "things". No, she absolutely hated it," he responds.

"Really? So, do you think that she's going to become normal with me? Because for my family plan to work we would both have to be normal," Kelly says.

As Lewis goes to respond, Cleo herself walks through the door.

"Lewis, are you home? We are having company for dinner," she yells, thinking he is upstairs, before turning into the living room and spotting Kelly.

>"Oh no, Kelly, I'm sorry, I totally forgot you were coming over today," Cleo says.<p>

"That's alright, I can go, but before I do, is it true? Did you really hate being a mermaid?" Kelly asks just as Cleo's company arrives.

"Yes, at first I did," Cleo says before her dad jumps in and says, "Is this what you wanted to tell us?"

Cleo spins around, surprised that her family had come so quickly when Kelly responds for her, "Probably, but it was for me, wasn't it?"

Suddenly, their dad looks at Kelly, and says, " Kelly?"

"Yah, dad, it's me. The daughter you sent away," Kelly says gaining some of that old anger back in her voice.

Cleo looks back and forth between the two before saying, "Let's have a seat, there's a lot to talk about."

Everyone takes a seat, and before anyone can even formulate a way to start this conversation, Kim throws water on Cleo and Kelly. Since they knew it was going to come out on the conversation, they didn't bother running and instead waited for their tails to show up.

"I knew it! You didn't believe me the last time, but you can't deny it now," Kim yells.

****At Emma and Bella's place****

****Emma's POV****

As I sat in my room, thinking about giving up my powers for that short time, I suddenly hear voices.

"Do you have something you want to tell me Ash?" I hear a voice ask. Is that Bella? It must be.

Ash responds, "What would I have to tell you?"

"Why don't you start with the mermaid I saw you with last week," Bella says.

Ash tried to pretend he doesn't know what Bella is talking about, "What mermaid?"

"The one I saw you kissing on Mako."

"You saw us," Ash says.

"So, it's true then? It really was you with another girl? Another

mermaid, no less," Bella says angrily.

"Yes, and her name is Melanie."

"I don't care what her name is. Is it true what she said about her being the reason you suddenly care about your twin daughters?" Bella asks.

I've heard enough. I don't care to hear his answer. I retreat back to where I can't hear them anymore.

How can he do this to me? More importantly, what do I do about him? On one hand, he is helping, a lot actually, but on the other hand, what if he breaks up with this girl? Will he leave me then? I need to talk to someone, but who?

****At the cafÃ©****

****Rikki's POV****

It's been a few days since the incident with Sophie, and the meeting with the girls. I still haven't talked to Zane about what Sophie told me. So, I came here after class with the intention of talking to him. Since we share the office, I don't bother knocking, but head right in.

I stop as I see Sophie telling Zane almost the exact same thing she told me, except trying to convince him what she's saying is true instead of asking if it is true. When she talked to me, it seemed like she was trying to get me to admit I was lying when I wasn't.

Since neither one of them had looked at me when I walked in, I decided to sit on the couch and listen to Zane's response to Sophie's accusations.

After she finished her rant, he pauses before saying, " I almost don't care if you are right or not. I love her, and whatever reason brought her back to me, I should be thankful."

"How can you be thankful? She's just some stupid slut. You deserve a real woman who isn't going to yank you around," Sophie says angrily.

"Even if I fell for your lies, I'm not going to go for you," Zane says.

"We'll see about that," she says before turning and walking out the door, completely missing me sitting on the couch.

I still don't say anything, as Zane has his head in his hands, mumbling incoherently. Then suddenly he picks up his phone and starts dialing. I begin to wonder who he's calling when my phone goes off, and he finally realizes I'm here.

"Rikki? How long have you been sitting there?" he asks as she shuts his phone.

"Not long, but I heard what Sophie was telling you," I say not really revealing anything.

"Okay, so this sounds bad, but is it true? Are you only back with me because of the twins?" Zane asks,

"No, I don't think so. I mean I was still in love with you, and you were trying so hardâ€¦I mean I didn't even know about the twins when we got back together. I know it seems convenient, but I honestly had no clue when we got back together. Because if you remember that was the day Denman found us, and we didn't find out until a week later," I say.

"That makes sense now. And just so you know even if that was the reason you came back to meâ€¦I'd take it," he says.

"I know, and don't worry about Sophie. I'm sure she'll give up soon," I say.

"So, our twins. You going to the doctor soon?" Zane asks.

"Yes, in a few days actually. And there's something else I wanted to talk to you about," I say before going into the conversation with Miss C, and the additional conversation with the girls. After I finish, he says, "Wow, I guess we just keep learning new things."

"Yah, we do. You don't think I should give it up even for only a short time?"

"No, I don't think that's a good idea. It might turn everything upside down again."

Suddenly, I get a text. It's from Emma.

****Can we meet at Mako? I need to talk to you, and only you, Rikki.****

I look up at Zane, "I guess I'm wanted," I say before kissing him goodbye and walking or more like waddling out of the cafÃ©.

****At Cleo and Lewis's house****

****Cleo's POV****

As soon as Kim threw the water on us, I knew that now was that time to tell the truth. So, both of us just sat on the floor, and waited for our tails to appear. I look up, and see the victorious look on Kim's face, the surprise on my dad's, and understanding on Sam's.

Before anyone could say anything, my dad recovers, and gets up and walks over to Kelly. I think she expected him to slap her or something, because of the look in her eyes, but instead he hugged her.

"I'm sorry. I know that's not enough, and it never will be, but I truly am sorry," he says.

"You are right, it's not enough, but when I become normal in a few weeks perhaps you can make it up to me," Kelly says.

"I thought we were going to talk about that," I say.

"I don't understand, normal? What do you mean become normal?" my dad asks. "And why didn't I know that you were one, too?"

"I didn't think I could tell you," I say.

"I knew she was one. I'm surprised that you knew Kelly was one and not Cleo," Sam says.

I look up, "How did you know?"

"Well, let me tell you a story."

****Flashback****

****NO POV****

Sam, about 5 years younger, is walking down the beach on the other side of Australia, nowhere near Mako Island, when she sees a young girl looking around confused. Sam walks over to the girl, who looked like she was just sitting behind a rock, but when Sam got the whole view of the girl, she gasped. The girl's eyes widen, and she tries to get back in the water.

"No wait! I won't hurt you," Sam yells.

"How do I know that?" the young girl asks.

"I promise. I mean you no harm. You just look lost, and I want to help you," Sam says.

"I am lost, but I'm not sure where I want to go."

"What's your name?"

"I don't know. I'm told my name is Eva, but I don't remember much. I guess I got a concussion the night I turned into a mermaid, but I don't know for sure," Eva says.

"Why don't we get you dried off, and you can tell me who these people are that are telling you this stuff," Sam says.

They quickly get her dried off, and go into a restaurant near the beach. Once they were sitting down, and settled, Eva began her story.

"The last thing I remember was being at home, in New Zealand, I believe, asleep. I remember waking up to find that I was moving, but not me moving. I was in a car that was moving. I didn't see anything as I was knocked out again. The next thing I knew I was in a cave that had a strange pool that had a hole above it. I looked around, and it seemed like I was alone, but I didn't feel alone. Either way, I felt like the pool was important some how. So, I walked over to it, and touched it. It seemed safe enough so I took off my shoes and got in. I'm not really sure what made me do it, but I did. The next thing I know, some bubbles came up around me, and I felt different. As I tried to get out of the water I hit my head, and that's all I remember."

"So, what happened after that? I mean I think it's obvious that something happened to you, but how long has it been, and who told you what your name was?" Sam asks.

"Well, that's the confusing part. When I finally wake up, a woman names Linda tells me that she "found" me unconscious in a cave, and that she wanted to help me. I told her I felt fine, I just wanted to go home. Ignoring my request to go home, she started asking questions that I couldn't answer. She told me that she found out my name is Eva, and I was about 13. All she kept saying was that nobody was looking for me, and she thinks it's because I'm different. I asked her what she meant, and she poured water on me. She asked me how long I've been this way, and I told her, I don't remember ever being this way. She spent days convincing me to help her learn more about this, and convincing me that she could help me, so I let her test on me," Eva says.

"Then what happened?" Sam asks.

"I realized I was just a science experiment to her. That she didn't care, she just wanted to use me, so I asked again to go home, and she responded by repeating what she told me the first time I asked, that no one loved me or wanted me. So I broke out. It's probably not even safe for me to be in one place. I should go," Eva says.

"Wait, I can help you."

****End of Flashback****

"We spent the next few weeks trying to get her home, and keeping her safe. I took her to the doctor to see what we could do about her concussion. It took some time, but she did start to get better, and I noticed that she avoided water like the way you do, so I figured it out. Especially with the way you disappeared when we went to the beach. I didn't want to force you to tell me or your father so I just kept the information to myself," Sam finishes.

"Wow, I guess I should've just told you," I say.

"But you didn't, and it's because of what we did to Kelly, isn't it?" my dad asks.

"Actually no, I only met her about 2 months ago, and I've been a mermaid for three or four years," I say.

"Are you telling me that when I tried to prove you were a mermaid after I found the dairy, it was true?" Kim asks.

"Yes, it was true," I say.

Kim looks like she's going to explode in anger, but dad cuts her off, "That's not important, what's important is what you mean by becoming normal?"

"It's kind of hard to explain," I start.

"But we'll just skip all the boring details, and tell you that if we were to jump into the moon pool at Mako island on this full moon it will take away our powers," Kelly finishes.

"And you are doing this for us aren't you?" my dad asks.

"Of course we are, or at least I am. You don't love me because of what I am," Kelly says.

"You don't have to do that. I do love you even if you are a mermaid. It was your mother that was unhappy about it, not me. I just didn't know how to convince her it was okay."

"So, you let her get rid of me," Kelly says.

"Yes, but now you are here, and I will make it up to you. I promise," my dad says.

"I don't think he wants you to become normal again," I tell Kelly.

"Then I'll take some time to think about it," Kelly says.

"Good, so Sam, what happened to the girl, Eva?" I ask.

"She's doing okay. Her last letter said that she was coming here, and we found out that her real name is Melanie."

****At the moon pool****

****No POV****

Rikki swam to Mako as fast as her pregnant body would let her. As her head popped out of the water, she saw that Emma, blue tail and all, was sitting in the sand.

"I'm here, alone Em, what's up?" Rikki asks.

Emma takes a deep breathe. "I wanted to talk to you about Ash."

"What about him? Is he giving you problems again?"

"Well, not exactly. I kind of overheard a conversation between him and Bella." She recounts what she heard and finishes with, "I think she's the only reason he's interested in his daughters. What do I do?"

"Well, you need to talk to him. Even if she's the reason he came back, I don't believe he will leave you now, but you need to find out if any of that is true," Rikki says.

"You are right. Thanks," Emma says before going back out into the water.

****Emma's POV****

I was right to talk to Rikki. I know that she would think logically, and be blunt with me. I knew that talking to Ash was what I should do, but having someone else tell me that, made me want to do it more.

Before I know it, I'm pounding on his door. I need nothing, but the honest truth, and I hope he's here.

Suddenly, as I go to know some more, the door swings open.

"Whoa Emma, what's up?" Ash asks as he registers that it's me.

"Is it true? Are you dating some new mermaid? And is she the only reason you came back?"

Before he can answer, none other than the woman in question walks out of Ash's bedroom.

"I knew I couldn't trust you," I say before turning around and leaving.

17. Preparations and Judgments

Chapter 16: Preparations and Judgments

****Emma's POV****

"Emma, wait, please," I hear Ash yell behind me. I keep going until I suddenly feel water being thrown on me.

I spin around to glare at Ash, when I realize it wasn't him. It was her.

"You might want to sit down so you don't end up taking a fall that could hurt your twins."

I know she's right, so I sit, right in the middle of the hallway.

"That's better now, I'm sorry that I had to do that to you, but I think we need to talk."

For some reason, I look into her eyes, and see that she is right. We need to talk. She dries me off and helps me up. We go into Ash's apartment, and she tells Ash that she wants some time to talk to me. He answers with, "I have to go to work, anyways." He then leaves, and the girl brings me a glass of lemonade with a straw.

I wait for her to start.

"Hi Emma, my name is Melanie, and I have a story to tell you," Melanie says.

"I'm not here for your story. I'm here because Ash doesn't care about me or our kids, he's just doing it for you," I say.

"Please just listen to me," she says.

"Fine, talk."

"Well my story actually starts about six years ago. I was twelve, and my parents fought a lot. I was the reason why. My dad didn't want a daughter just a son, and he was trying to convince my mom I was useless. She wouldn't let him do anything to me like get rid of me. Anyways, I guess he took things into his own hands. He drugged me, let my aunt kidnap me, and turn me into a mermaid. They must have

given me something to forget everything because when I woke up, I didn't even remember who I was. My aunt Linda told me that she could help me, and that my family didn't love me anymore because I was mermaid, so I spent a year being tested on. Finally, I get the nerve to run away. A woman named Sam helped me gain my memory and helped me back to my mom. My dad was long gone by then, and I'm still not sure my mom was happy I came back."

"But that's just the start. The part I wanted to tell you about was roughly three years ago. I had my first boyfriend. He was from around here, and seemed nice to me even if everyone else thought he was a jerk. Everything was fine until he found out I was a mermaid. At first he was nice and understanding, then he realized how important it was for me to keep my secret. So, he decided to use that to his advantage. I didn't want to do anything sexual with him because I wasn't sure what would happen if I did get pregnant. So, at first he was okay with other methods of pleasure for a while before he got tired of it. I still said no to full on sex for the fear of what could happen. Until he threatened me, I had a choice: risk have a baby or risk being studied for the rest of my life. Honestly, I thought I'd risk him telling someone and them not believing him, but he basically made the choice for me by telling me I wasn't getting out of it. It went on that way until the end of the summer, when I had to go back to New Zealand and I found out I was pregnant. When I told him, he said that the "fish" was not his, and if I wanted to keep my secret I'd pretend that I didn't know whose it was."

"So, what happened?" I ask.

"I went home, told my mom what happened and she begrudgingly helped me until I turned 18. Then she told me I had to figure things out on my own," Melanie says.

"So, you told Ash this, and what happened?" I ask.

"I explained to him that you being a mermaid makes this so much more difficult, and even if you weren't, it's wrong to do that to you, and actually even without the story I think my son would've made him change his mind. The sadness in his eyes when he first spotted my son showed me how he was already remorseful about the things he said to you, and don't worry even if we break up, he won't leave you. I know that I made him rethink things, but I didn't make him go back, like you think," Melanie says.

"I'm sorry. When I heard about you, I just assumed the worst. It really isn't like me, but I was jealous and misguided. I hope that we can be friends," I say.

"Me too. Actually, if you aren't busy, I'm supposed to meet up with the women who helped me at the caf  , you could come with and meet my little Nathan. Kind if see what it's like to have to watch someone so little when it comes to the secret," Melanie says.

"I'd love to," I say feeling a lot better.

At the caf  

Bella's POV

The band and I are rehearsing today for Cleo's wedding. We wanted to

make sure that any songs we do in person, aren't repeated on the CD's that will be playing in our absence. Cleo and Lewis said that they understand why we can't play continuously with me being so pregnant. So, we came up with the CDs to fill in the space.

We also want timing with everything to be right, like party type songs during the dance portion and calmer songs during dinner. We also had to plan the scheduled times to be up here, and which songs. How long the breaks will be and how many. We've never put this much effort into one show.

"Alright, let's practice some of the new songs that we've been working on," I say.

We start to play when Nate stops playing to stare at this girl, none other than Ash's new girlfriend, walking in holding the hand of some little boy, and next to her is Emma?

Instead of embarrassing myself by freaking out on this girl for trying to gain Emma's trust when she's sleeping with Emma's children's father. I round on Nate.

"Why did you stop playing?" I ask.

He doesn't answer just says, "I think we are good for today."

"Seriously Nate, we have a lot of work to do," I say, but he seems distracted. He has a piece of paper that he's writing on, and then stands up, and walks into the office.

I try to get his attention before telling the band that we are done for the day. I decide to follow Nate. I go to the door of the office which is slightly ajar.

"I can't drop off the note myself, I don't want to see her or for her to know I'm still living around here," Nate says.

"Look you made the mistake, you need to face up to it," Zane replies.

"I can't do it! I don't want to be a father to that fish, and I shouldn't have to be. And if she sees me, she might try to convince me I should," Nate answers.

Nate has a kid? And he knows Ash's new girlfriend?

"I don't think that's why she would come here, but you realize that you broke your promise. So you should take responsibility for your son," Zane says.

"What promise?"

"Did you forget that you promised to never tell anyone if she would leave you out of it?"

"But she came back, so she broke her promise to never come back," Nate says obviously looking for a way out.

"She could've thought you left so maybe she's not here to screw you,

but you are going to give this to her yourself," Zane says.

"NO, please I can't," Nate says.

"Be a man."

"No," Nate says before I hear his footsteps coming towards the door. I get out of the way so that I can stay hidden. What is going on? Nate doesn't see me, as he's focusing on not being seen by Ash's new girl. Suddenly, Zane follows suit, and I follow him as he gets closer to Emma and the girl.

Zane walks straight to the girl, hands her the note, and says, "I'm sorry for this."

****Emma's POV****

Melanie and I are sitting in a booth with Nathan, when Zane walks up with a note, and saying he's sorry. She doesn't even question this as she opens the note.

She reads it twice before looking up, and saying, "It's alright. I didn't come here for him."

"Anyways, thanks," she says to him before turning to me. "Emma, I know I just met you, but do you think you could watch Nathan for a little while? There's something I need to do," Melanie says.

I didn't think twice. "Of course I will. I live under Ash's apartment, so I'll be there for you to pick him up."

Melanie thanks me before getting up, and leaving. I look down at Nathan, who's asleep and start to think if a way to get him home before Zane, who's still standing next to the booth, says, "I'll carry him for you."

"Really? But what about the café?"

"Ash can handle it for 15 minutes, and you shouldn't be carrying anything."

He walks up to Ash to explain the situation, and comes back to me and Nathan. He picks up Nathan, and we start for my apartment.

"So, congrats on the girls. Do you know what you are going to name them?"

"Not yet, I've been preparing for everything, but that. Did Rikki tell you about the moon?"

"Yes, and I must say that I'm surprised you, and Cleo are even considering it."

"Why are you surprised? It should make sense to consider it."

"But Emma, you should understand by now that's part of you, and say any of you did give it up solely for yourselves, and then got it back after you had them. What would happen if you get pregnant again? How would you explain how one kid is a mermaid and the other two aren't? and that would happen if you get pregnant again in the next 8

years."

"Wow, I didn't think about that. What if that causes jealousy or something? What if it'll make them become mermaids to fit in with the family? Like the opposite with Cleo and Kelly," I say starting to ramble.

"So, it doesn't make sense it give it up for only a few months," Zane says.

"Wow, I think you are right. We are going to have to prepare for this full moon," I say unlocking my door.

He lets me in first and then places Nathan on the couch. "I have to get back now, but think about what I said."

****At Cleo and Lewis's place****

****Cleo's POV****

After everything settled down, Lewis made some dinner as we all talked about the mermaid thing. Kelly still isn't totally convinced that she should stay a mermaid, but as we talked she let her guard down, feeling slightly better as we become more like a family.

Suddenly, I realized that Kim never got her answer as to how I didn't change at the miss Sea Queen pageant. So, she asked again.

"Well, when I turned into a mermaid, I got some powers," I say instead of explaining some more, I just showed her.

"So, it's been you all this time?" Kim asks somewhat angrily.

"Yes, but I didn't mean to harm you, I just wanted to feel better by making you wet."

"Well, that's mean. Maybe you really are evil," Kim says.

"You're joking right? You're not going to go around telling people about this?" I ask seriously.

"No, I won't. Just know I'll be getting you back."

"And how do you plan to do that without exposing me?" I ask.

"I don't know, but I'm sure Kelly will help me, right Kelly?" Kim says.

"Why not? It'll be fun sisterly bonding," Kelly replies.

"Are you guys going to team up on me now?" I ask jokingly.

"Duh, we have to team up on the married sister," Kim says.

"Haha," I say.

"Speaking of, we came over to talk about the preparations for your wedding," dad says.

"Oh yah, I guess we got distracted. So, we have everything pretty much set up. The caf   is all ready, Bella said the band is ready, we have everything bought, and basically everything is set," I say.

"What about school? Are you going to miss for a honey moon?" dad asks.

"Actually, as luck would have it, school is off for the week. So, it works out," I say.

"That's good then."

****At the caf  ****

****Bella's POV****

As soon as the girl left, I chased after her. I need to know what's going on. When I find her, she's arguing with Nate.

"I didn't come here for you! Nathan and I don't need you, so get over yourself," I hear her yell.

"Then why are you here? Why couldn't you stay away?" Nate screams back.

"I have friends here, and I got a scholarship to the university. I have to think about Nathan, and going to school is going to help me take better care of him," she screams back.

"Well, I need you to leave."

"I can't do that. I have to think about our son, and besides I wasn't going to bother even looking in your direction until I got this note," she says.

"And I meant every word. Leave or I'll tell the world your secret," Nate says looking determined.

"I'm not afraid of you anymore."

"We'll see about that," he says walking away.

I go after him, and completely ignore her. When I finally catch up to him, I grab his arm, "What the hell was that?"

"Nothing. It's none of your business, Bella."

"Seriously, Nate. You stopped playing and interrupted our practice to run away from you past?"

"You don't understand."

"I understand that you left her," I say.

"She made me do it. I was taken advantage of and I'm not going to let her throw that kid in my face!"

"You're telling me that she essentially raped you?"

"Yes, and I can't let her ruin my life again. Now go away."

He rips his arm out of my hand, and walks away. Is it true? Is she really one of those girls? I have to warn Emma about getting too close to this unknown mermaid.

****At Emma and Bella's apartment****

****Emma's POV****

Nathan had woken up a little bit ago, and we were playing when Melanie knocked on the door. When I answered she looked like she had been crying, and I immediately hugged her.

It's amazing how my opinion of her changed so much after hearing her story. When we break apart, she says, "Thanks for taking care of Nathan, we should go."

"It's no problem. He's a great kid, and don't go, I could make us something to eat."

"I don't knowâ€|"

"Come on, you could tell me what happened," I say.

"Okay."

So, we walk over to the kitchen, and I put on a pot of water and wait for her to start.

She wouldn't so I prompted her.

"How did you name Nathan?" I ask.

"It was a version of his father's name," she answers.

"How so?"

"Alright, alright I'll tell you. Nate, the guy that was the keyboard player of that band, is the father of Nathan. You know my story, he just threatened me again because I came back. I chased after him to make it clear that I wasn't here for him."

Suddenly, Bella comes in, "What is she doing here?"

"I invited her, and that's not exactly how you greet someone," I say.

"I don't care. Do you even know her? She stole your boyfriend, and is probably forcing him to stick around," Bella yells.

"Bella, we need to talk. Outside."

She relently walks outside, and I follow her, "What was that?"

"She is sleeping with the father of your children, and she raped Nate. Don't you see that she is not your friend."

"Maybe, you should try hearing her side of things before making a judgment."

"Why bother? She could always just lie."

"Give her a chance."

"Fine."

18. Naming and Time Flying

Chapter 17: Naming and Time Flying

****Thursday May 5****th****, 2011****

****At the doctor's office****

****Rikki's POV****

Zane was supposed to come with me to find out the genders of the babies, but he got stuck at school, so I wait on my own wondering what they are.

"Rikki Chadwick."

I smile and get up. I follow the nurse to the room where she checks all the basic things like weight and temperature. Then she tells me to lie down, and wait for the doctor. It takes a few minutes before the doctor comes in.

She warns me that she's about to put the gel on my stomach before she does it. I work on my concentration, when she tells me, "Okay, I can see what they are now. You see how this one has something the other one doesn't? That means that that one is a boy and this one is a girl."

"That's great," I say letting go of my concentration resulting in my tail and the tails of my twins.

"So, you are all set to go, and congratulations."

I dry myself off, and start to head home. A boy and a girl. What am I going to name them? I wonder what Emma's going to name her twins. She should be at the cafÃ©, I'll go there.

****At the cafÃ©****

****Emma's POV****

I came here after class because Ash is working, and I'm supposed to give him some names to choose from. Also, Bella wanted me to hear some songs that she's been working on for Cleo's wedding.

I don't think that she really wants me to listen to her songs as much as keeping an eye on me. Even after Melanie explained her story, Bella was wary. She told me that anyone with an imagination could have come with that story. That maybe she's told the lie so much, she actually believes it.

That resulted in a screaming match that did neither of us any good. She finally relented, and just said that she worries about me and

that this girl is just strange. I'm not sure what she means, but I just wish they'd get along.

As for Nate, I haven't looked at him the same way again. Kind of like I looked at Ash when he told me he wasn't going to be a father. Maybe that's why I relate so well to Melanie so well.

Rikki just walked in, looking thoughtful, I didn't she was supposed to work today. She's looking around, and before she finds whatever she's looking for, Ash walks up to her. Sense the band is taking a break, I can hear every word.

"Is everything alright? I didn't think you were supposed to come in today," Ash says.

"Yah, everything is fine. I just knew Emma would be here, and I wanted to talk to her about maybe names."

"Oh good, she's right over there," he says pointing in my direction.

Rikki thanks him, and walks over to me.

"Hey Emma," she says.

"What's up, Rikki," I ask.

"Not much, I just found out that I'm having a girl and a boy. And I was wondering if you could give me ideas on names," Rikki says.

"Shouldn't you talk to Zane about that?"

"Well yah, but I wanted to get some ideas," Rikki says.

"Uh well, I'm not having any boys so I only have a list of girl names."

"That's alright."

"Okay well, I was going to name one of them Lily because it's a pretty name," I say thinking that Ash could always name the other one if he doesn't live the name Lily.

"That's a pretty name. I thought about naming them after somebody, but I honestly don't know," she replies.

"Well, Ash's new girlfriend named her son after his father, even though his father abandoned them because she's a mermaid like us," I say.

"Ash has a new girlfriend? And you're okay with that?"

"Oh yah, I forgot I haven't told you. Yes, I've talked to her and Ash, and I'm okay. Some things are just meant to happen," I say although sometimes I'm not exactly okay with it.

"Wow, that's very mature of you. So, she has a son? Who's the father? Do we know him? How long have you known?"

"Uh, I found out a few days ago, yes, his name is Nathan, and Nate is his father."

"Guess it's a good thing Nate never found out about us then, otherwise who knows what would happen," she says.

"Yup, anyways, I'm not sure you want to name your son Zane. Or your daughter Rikki," I say.

"Well, I was thinking more of naming them after one of you, but I wouldn't want there to be confusion in any way or for any of you to feel weird or unhappy about it," she says.

"Hmmmâ€¦I see what you mean. I never even considered naming them after someone," I say truthfully.

"So, you said Lily for sure, what about Rose? Like having both be a type of flower," Rikki says.

"Huh, like a theme? Wait, I thought you wanted me to help you?"

"I do, but it helps to pretend to help you. Like if I could think of names for yours, I could think of a name for mine," she says.

"Alright then. Ummâ€¦Melody or something else that would fit a mermaid," I say jokingly.

"The names don't have to fit a mermaid," she says.

"I know, I was joking. But seriously, I was supposed to have a list of names for Ash, but I don't, which is totally not like me," I say.

"Then why didn't you?"

"I don't know, I figured that something will just come to me."

"Okay what about Isabelle? Or is that too close to Bella? Or Ashley? Or Jasmine?" She offers.

"Hmmmâ€¦I don't know. I mean Lily and Jasmine? I guess Isabelle might work, but we should ask Bella first," I say.

"Do you really think she'd care?" I ask.

"She might."

"What about Victoria? Hannah? Gianna?" I ask.

"Hmâ€¦those are interesting names. Like I could see myself naming my kids that. What about boy names?"

"I don't need boy names," I say.

"But I do," Rikki says.

"You do?" a voice asks.

We both look up to see Zane.

"Yes, I do need boy names," Rikki answers.

"So, we're having boys," Zane asks looking excited.

"No, we are having one boy and one girl," she says.

"That's fantastic!"

"Wow, you're really excited," I say wishing Ash would be that way.

"Yah, I am. So, what were you girls talking about?" Zane asks.

"Names for our kids," Rikki answers.

"That's cool. Guess you girls are getting excited about it," Zane says.

"Maybe," I say. "Rikki seems more excited than I do."

"Right."

The rest of the conversation remained on baby names, and eventually Ash and Bella joined us. Before we knew it, it was late into the night, and the baby talk had to stop for now. Maybe as we get closer, we can talk some more about the names.

****One week later****

****Thursday May 12****th****, 2011****

****At the soon to be McCartney's house ****

****Cleo's POV****

Kelly and Kim are coming over to help me finish all the decorations for my reception. Last week we all went out to celebrate me getting married, but of course we couldn't do anything outrageous. Kelly and I also need to be prepared and talk about tomorrow.

She's 50/50 on whether or not to jump in the moon pool. I've told her some stories about my few years as a mermaid, and she agreed to reconsider. She admits that she loves being a mermaid now that dad still loves her, and Sam and Kim are giving her a chance.

I think that Kim actually being accepting is what will stop her from jumping in. It's only been just over a week, and they've been practically inseparable. You'd almost think that they were the twins. Kim told us that being mermaids is what makes us us, and that giving it away will be like giving away a part of ourselves.

I, on the other hand, know what I'm going to do. Rikki, Bella and Emma are all going to come over to talk about it tonight, but first, the wedding.

As we sit making the decorations, Kim gives Kelly a look, and all of the sudden I find myself soaked to the bone, and glaring at Kelly and Kim. I see that Kelly got up in time to not get wet so I grab my

water and throw it on her, and Kim. I know that Kim won't change obviously, but nobody likes being wet.

"Really? This is when you choose to get me back?" I ask.

"Of course, and besides you think this is the only time for you to get it?"

"Well, maybe," I say.

"You're funny, how many times did you send water flying up at me?" Kim asks.

"I don't know," I mumble.

"A lot, so that means I have to get you back a lot," Kim replies.

"Guess I'm in trouble with you," I say.

It's amazing how much closer Kim and I have gotten since she found out.

Maybe Kelly coming into our lives is a good thing. After drying off we get back to work until we've finished. Even though my wedding is in two days, Emma says I'm not as freaked out as she would be.

Suddenly, we've realized how late it's gotten, and Kim has to go home to do homework. Since we still have some time before I'm going to meet with girls, I offer to go for a swim.

Kelly actually smiles at this, and we get up to go. I smile, too. I want her to know that being afraid to love what we are isn't necessary. She admitted to me that she wanted to believe that she hated it. She's told herself that she hates it so much that she actually believes it. She knows that a part of her fights hating it, but she would just think about being abandoned to hate it again.

Over the time since our family found out, I have been telling her about my feelings on being a mermaid. I'm not always happy about it, and I definitely didn't start out happy about it. We've gone swimming and talked about how hard it was to hide, and how it made me feel to lie all the time.

She was so lucky to live with other mermaids even if it was because the family didn't want her. As we swim, both of us smiling, I realize the truth of my situation. If I gave it up until after the baby comes, and then get it back I'll have to hide it from him or her. Do you I really want to have to worry about that? I don't know.

Kelly and I head for the moon pool, she has gotten used to going there because I usually head there out of habit. We swim in together and see a black tail, and a slightly smaller gold tail.

We stop, wondering who this could possibly be, and whether or not to show ourselves to some unknown mermaids. We head up to the top of the water, thus being able to breathe and see while still hiding. We soon

see that it isn't two mermaids, but a mermaid and a merman, although the merman looks like a baby almost.

Kelly gives me a strange look as the mermaid says, "I won't stop you from coming in."

I look to Kelly, nod, and we swim in.

"How did you know?" I ask.

"I could feel your eyes on me," the mermaid says.

"Oh sorry. You just surprised us, that's all," I say.

"That's alright. You're Cleo right?" she asks.

"Yes, how did you know?" I ask.

"I'm friends with Emma, and I'm dating Ash. My name is Melanie, and this is my son, Nathan," Melanie says.

"Hi Nathan," I say kindly.

"I brought him here because I heard that the moon will take our powers away and I wanted to see what he thought about this, and such," Melanie says.

"How old is he?"

"Just over two. I know he doesn't really know what this will mean, but I wanted to make sure he likes this or doesn't like this before I change our lives," Melanie says.

Then Kelly speaks, "That reminds me, I never told anyone else just you. Should I tell the others?"

"Do you think they'll go for it?" I ask.

"Probably not," Kelly says.

"But still, they deserve the choice," I say.

"Okay, I'll go tell them. Nice to meet you. Bye," Kelly says.

Kelly leaves and I finally decide to ask the question I've been waiting to ask.

"Why is your tail black?"

"I was depressed while I was pregnant."

"I'm so sorry, is there any way to change it?" I ask.

"If I got pregnant again, and I was happy it would go to my favorite color," she says.

"Okay, well it was nice meeting you, and I wish you and Nathan luck with your decision," I say before taking my leave and heading home where the girls and I plan to meet.

****A half-hour later****

****Rikki's POV****

As I walk or waddle more like to Cleo and Lewis's house, I realize that I never actually told Bella and Cleo that I found out the genders of my twins. Bella had joined me and Emma talking about the names, but I never actually told her, and I haven't spoken to Cleo.

I knock on the door even though she's expecting me and the other girls. I hear Lewis yell that he's coming.

The door swings open to reveal Lewis as he welcomes me in. we walk into the living room, and I see Bella and Emma have arrived and places themselves on opposite sides of the room.

"I'm here," I say.

"Bout time," Emma says.

"Sorry, you know I like to be late," I say.

Emma goes to complain some more when Bella cuts her off, "Does it matter? She's here now."

Emma just looks angry in response.

"Anyways, so I've come up with my decision, do you all have yours?" Cleo asks.

We all say yes before she admits her decision.

"I've thought about this a lot. Lewis and Kelly even weighed in quite a bit, but I eventually came up with the only answer for me. I'm not going to do it," she finishes.

"I never even considered it," Bella says.

"I did, but only for a few minutes, long enough to realize that if I got pregnant again I would still have my baby be a mermaid or merman and then my twins would be left out, and that would just make the twins feel left out this making them want to force it on themselves. So, I won't be doing it either," I say.

"I have also decided not to do it," Emma says.

"Okay, so we all decided not to do it," I say.

"So, what do we do now?" Bella asks.

"Well, we have to make sure that we don't accidentally end up at the moon pool," Emma says.

"Yes, no matter what we can't let anyone drive us to the moon pool to give up our powers," Cleo says.

"Well, we don't have anyone that would want us to lose our powers this time around, do we?" Emma asks.

"I don't think so. I mean Denman and Charlotte are in the slammer, and Sophie doesn't know about us yet. All she knows is that Charlotte knows something that will get rid of all of us especially me and Bella, but she never actually told Sophie what it was. So, she couldn't possibly know how to use this moon against us," I say.

"Although if we really think about it, if something did happen, it would only be for just a month. We could last a month without it, can't we?" Emma asks.

"I'm honestly not even sure that I could. I can't remember a time that I was normal," Bella says.

"Anyways, what should we do to prepare for it?" Cleo asks.

"What if we just hang out at my house? We could stay the night there and get ready for the wedding in the morning," I say.

"Sounds great. Besides it's tradition to have Lewis and I spend the night away from each other the day before our wedding," Cleo says smiling up at Lewis.

"Sounds like the perfect plan," Bella says.

"So we will meet at my place just before the moon rises," I say.

We all agree and leave.

A/n thanks to those that review, I have a few chapters written so if you guys review I will update faster, if you don't than I will stick to once a week, Tuesday seems to be my lucky day so please review.

19. The Moon and Unanswered Questions

Chapter 18: The Moon and Unanswered Questions

Friday, May 13**th****, 2011**

At Emma and Bella's apartment

Emma's POV

I decided that I needed to pack a bag for tonight that includes my bridesmaid dress for Cleo's wedding. It's so important that nothing happens tonight, especially if we want tomorrow to go smoothly. Bella left a while ago to get Will, and do one last sound check, and rehearsal at the caf  .

I told Melanie that if she had decided not to become normal, she was welcome to come stay with us, although I didn't tell Bella that. Since I'm all set, I decide to just head over to Rikki's now. I open the door and come face to face with Ash.

"Hey Emma, I was just wondering if you needed help with the moon tonight," he says.

"Um, no, and shouldn't you be helping your girlfriend?" I ask. I

found that I'm not mad at her as I am at him because he chose to abandon our love, whereas she just fell into him, not trying to steal him away.

"Well, I would if she was still my girlfriend, but in all honestly, I should really help you," Ash says.

"Well, I don't need your help," I say then it hits me. "You broke up with her?"

"Yes, I told her that it wasn't fair to you, and that if I might still have feelings for you, I couldn't be with her anymore."

"Whereas she just fell into him, not trying to steal him away.

"Well, I would if she was still my girlfriend, but in all honestly, I should really help you," Ash says.

"Well, I don't need your help," I say then it hits me. "You broke up with her?"

"Yes, I told her that it wasn't fair to you, and that if I might still have feelings for you, I couldn't be with her anymore."

"You told me that you might not have ever loved me, how do you think you have any feelings for me," I question.

"I had feelings for you; I just don't think I loved you. Anyways, I thought maybe you and I could start over in our relationship. Except of course we still have to prepare for our girls," he says.

Since I'm wary of him, and the things that he has been saying, I tell him I'll think about it. He just nods and leaves.

So, I continue on my way to Rikki's.

****At Cleo and Lewis's house****

****Cleo's POV****

My dress and stuff were already brought over from my parents' house to Rikki's when they found out that's where I'll be getting ready due to the moon. I had to answer a lot of questions about the moon after saying that, but that was okay. So, now I'm here getting some pajamas and toiletries before I go over to Rikk's as the moon will be up in roughly three hours.

"Hey how are things going?" Lewis asks as he leans in the door way.

"Good, can't wait to spend the rest of my life with you," I say.

"Good, because I can't wait either," he says.

"Do you think we would have waited a while before getting married if it hadn't been for the baby?" I ask.

"Maybe, but we love each other and the baby is only proof of that," Lewis says.

"You're right."

"You're not having pre-wedding jitters are you?"

"No, just wondering, I'll see you tomorrow, my soon to be husband," I say before giving him a kiss placing my bag on my shoulder and heading to Rikki's for the full moon.

****At the cafÃ©****

****Bella's POV****

The band and I were going over the set for the wedding one last time when I see Melanie walk in. I see Nate tense, and lose track of what he's doing.

He grabs my arm, and turns me to face him. "Tell her she has to leave."

"I don't have the power to do that, Nate."

"Just do it, please. You don't know how hard it is to be in the same building as someone who has raped you."

"Fine, but I'm not sure I believe you."

I walk over to Melanie just after she sits down with Nathan.

"Hi, could you please leave?" I ask with a fake nice smile.

"NO."

"Pretty please," I say batting my eyelashes.

"NO."

"Look, you know I don't like you, you know that Nate doesn't want to see you, so why don't you just leave," I say getting rid of the fake nice thing I had going on.

"You don't own this place. I could do whatever I want," Melanie replies.

"Seriously, just leave, you're making everyone uncomfortable," I say.

"I'm fine, but if you don't watch it, I will make everything uncomfortable," Melanie says in a threatening tone.

"Are you threatening me?"

"That's for me to know, and for you to never find out," Melanie says.

"I knew Emma was wrong about you."

"You don't know maybe she was right," Melanie says before taking Nathan to a table outside.

I walk over to Nate and say, "She left kind of, and she went outside."

"That's worse, what if she's sitting outside plotting something," Nate answers me.

"Seriously, she can't hurt you," I say.

The rest of the band had left, and no one but Zane was working or even in the place, so I told him we should just go. Suddenly, water was coming out of the faucets and the smoothie machine was going crazy. Out of nowhere it seemed to be raining in the building, and as soon as the water touched my skin, my eyes widened.

Suddenly, Zane bursts through the office door, and grabs my arm and attempts to get me into the office, but it's too later. I can feel my tail forming and see the green out of the corner of my eye. Luckily for me, Zane could catch me, so I won't hurt my baby.

After Zane puts me safely on the floor, I look up at Nate to see the horror on his face.

"You're like her," he says sounding disgusted.

I'm so shocked, I have nothing to say.

"And the other girls, they are freaks like you, too."

"Nate, let's talk about this. Give the girls a chance; they aren't going to hurt you. Please just give them a chance to explain," Zane says.

"Why should I? They are just freaks!"

"Please, give them a chance," Zane insists,

"Fine, when?"

"Tonight. They are all coming over, and we can talk then. I'll go with you to your house to pack a bag," Zane says.

"Okay."

Zane then looks down at me, and around the room. "I guess I'm going to have to call Rikki for help on this." He then pulls out his phone and calls Rikki. It was a short call, obviously just enough to get her over here as quickly as possible.

Zane moves me into the office so that if anyone does come in, they won't see a mermaid chilling in the middle of the café. He then gave Nate a mop, and walked outside to check for Melanie. He came back to inform me that she was not here anymore. I'm not relieved. I just hope Rikki gets here soon.

****Rikki's POV****

Zane's sudden phone call scared me. I had to leave a note for Cleo

and Emma to wait for me, I'd be back soon. I ran as fast as I could, given my condition, to the café. When I arrive, I see no one outside, so I head inside. Immediately, I spy the puddles of water everywhere, and Zane attempting to mop it up. Careful not to get wet, I moved inside the door, and began to heat the water.

Zane looks up, and smiles. He looks relieved, and in no time at all the area in the front is dried. He motions to the office, and I walk in there.

Immediately, I see Nate glaring down at Bella, who is on the floor as a mermaid. Obviously, he knows about us now, so I don't hesitate to dry up the room.

The look on Nate's face when the room starts to heat up is so funny. Suddenly, Bella is human again, and I'm waiting to find out what the hell happened.

Zane comes in and says, "There's a lot to explain, but Nate's coming over to talk to the girls tonight, so we will explain when we come back to the house tonight. I'm going with Nate to get him a bag. I'll meet you at home."

"Alright, so we are closing for the night?" I ask.

"Yes, do you think you and Bella could do it?" Zane asks.

"Yah, no problem. We'll meet you at home," I say then lean up to kiss him, and watch them leave.

I turn to Bella, and she just shakes her head. I help her up, and we close the café. She grabs her bag, and we head over to my house.

Something tells me that this Friday the 13th is definitely going to be an unlucky one.

****At Rikki and Zane's house****

****Cleo's POV****

Walking up to Rikki's Place, I see Emma sitting on the porch, and glancing down the road.

"What's up, why are sitting outside?" I ask.

"Rikki left us a note. She has some emergency at the café, and she'll be back shortly. The door's locked," Emma replies

Suddenly, I see Rikki and Bella running towards us with a giant cloud chasing after them. Rikki seems to see me, and suddenly tosses her keys. I catch them and find the one for her door, sliding it in the slot, we burst through the door as the water hits our skin. Suddenly, the cloud retracts, and we see Melanie pulling it towards her.

The door slams shut behind us, and we barely make it to the living room before we fall to the ground with our tails. When we finally catch our breath I see Emma glaring at Bella, who is glaring back.

"What was that about?" I ask.

"Melanie attacked us, but we should wait for Zane and Nate before I explain more," Bella says.

"Nate knows?" Emma asks.

"Yes, and we have a lot of explaining to do," Bella says.

Before we could continue or even dry off, Zane and Nate walk through the door. Zane stops as he sees the four of us on our backs with our tails. "What happened now?" he asks.

"Melanie," is all Rikki replies. She then proceeds to dry us all off, and we head down to their basement/ pool room where we see that there are four air mattresses blown up on each side of the pool. We all sit down on one side and look at Bella to explain what happened.

She takes a breath, and then, "Well, I've had a bad feeling about her since I met her, and Nate has been trying to avoid her, so when she came in, he asked me to get her to leave. So, I tried nicely to ask her to leave, and she responded no several times. So, I got angry and she kind of threatened me, but left anyways. So, I said alright I guess we are good. Zane was in the office, and Nate and I were on the stage when suddenly it was attack of the water. From the faucets to the ice machine, water was coming from everywhere and soaked us. Of course there was nothing I could do, Zane rushed out of the office to catch me, and Nate was disgusted with me. So, Zane told him to give us a chance by coming here and talking to us," Bella finishes.

"But for whatever reason, we didn't make it here safely. Melanie found us, and decided to send her cloud on us. We obviously managed to keep away from the water until we got here," Rikki says.

"So, what happened? Why does she hate us?" I ask.

"I'm not sure. I know she didn't like me, but to chase Rikki down as well?" Bella asks.

"It could be that Ash broke up with her, throwing her into a fit of rage," Emma says quietly.

"Well, her tail is black, could that have anything to do with this?" I ask.

"Did she tell you why she has a black tail?" Bella asks.

"She said it was because she was depressed during her pregnancy," I answer.

"Hmmmâ€¦|what if that affects her state of mind?" Rikki asks.

Suddenly, my phone rings causing us all to jump. It's Kelly.

"Kelly," I say answering the phone.

"I have some news about that mermaid we met with a black tail," she says. Since that's what we were talking about I put her on

speaker.

"What news?" I ask.

"Apparently, because she hadn't gone completely black, like how her top was white, she can be nice and understanding. However, the blackness in her tail indicates that she has evil and hatred in her. She can go off at any minute, and if you are the object of her hatred, she'll come after you, but only if something sets her off."

"So, if she's upset and we are her targets, what then?" I ask.

My answer was Melanie's face in the pool, completely larger than life, saying, "YOU DIE."

"I'm guessing that she's after you," Kelly says.

"Yup, thanks for the attempted warning, we have to figure out a way to fix this," I say.

"Wait, there's more. If you lure her to the moon pool tonight, she'll turn completely white, diminishing all the evil in her," Kelly says.

"Thanks, now we have to make a plan," I say and then Kelly hangs up.

"Alright so what are we going to do?" Rikki asks.

"I'll lure her there, she hates me the most, you girls explain to Nate that we aren't all freak," Bella says before getting up and walking out.

"I don't think any of us were going to argue with her anyways, so what do you want to know," Rikki says.

"When did it happen?" Nate asks.

"Remember when I quit swimming? That's when," Emma says.

"So when Nate and I threw Cleo in the pool at Marium's party, she turned into mermaid?" Zane asks.

"Yup, that's why I didn't want to get wet," I say.

"And the door, and the pool?" Nate asks.

"Me and Emma," Rikki answers.

"What about the mermaid at the Lorelie reck?"

"That was Emma, she saved you the first time, and the second was going to get the pictures and the locket," Rikki says.

"But the pink hairâ€¦"

"I attempted to die my hair, but it only changed as I changed," Emma says.

"So, what about that thing that happened with Lewis's boat?" Nate asks.

"Charlotte did it, we were trying to stop it," I say.

"and that day you girls were all over me?"

"That perfume you wore, mermorized us, and we couldn't control it," I say.

"So, why should I keep your secret?"

"Because we keep trying to help you, we were friends before, and we should stay that way, just because we change, doesn't mean we will hurt you," Emma says.

"Alright, I'll think about it," Nate replies.

****Bella's POV****

I'm shocked that no one came after me. Maybe they think this is all my fault. I see that Melanie is following me as I step out of the house, but the cloud doesn't appear.

I head towards the water as fast as I can. I have to get her to Mako. As I reach the water, I see that she doesn't hesitate to follow me in.

I swim towards Mako with her got on my tail. I make it to the beach and dry off using my power as quick as I can. She's still directly behind me, drying off just as quickly, and getting up as I enter the forest.

I'm back to running, the fastest way to the moon pool without being in the pool. I can see that she's struggling a bit not having been there this way, but still close behind. Before I know it, I'm above the entrance, and I carefully sit down and slide down the hole. I move out of the way just in time for her to slide down as well, but I don't stop. I go right into the moon pool's area.

"What do you want from me?" I ask.

"You to die. Why should you live happy and healthy when I can't?" Melanie asks.

"I didn't do this to you," I yell.

"Yes, you did. You upset me because you knew I was dangerous. You ruin everything!"

"I was just trying to protect my friends," I say.

"Well, I don't care!"

I slowly use my jelantin power to incase her legs, and cuase her to fall into the moon pool. The moon is just about over head.

"This is to help you," I say.

"I don't need your help. I can get rid of everyone I hate without

it," she yells.

"NO! you can't just get rid of people that you don't like," I say.

"Yes, I can," she yells.

"No," I yell back as the moon goes overhead and she's suddenly subdued.

After the moon passes, she wakes up with a white tail and top. I smile before diving into the water without a word, and going back to where I belong.

****A/N hey guys and girls, I meant to update sooner, but it didn't happen. Thanks for all the reviews. Keep reviewing and let me know how you are enjoying this story****

20. Wedding and After Affects

Chapter 19: Wedding and After Affects

****At Rikki and Zane's Place****

****Rikki's POV****

After all the questions, it wasn't long until Bella came back.

"We don't have to worry about her anymore," Bella says.

We were all happy, but it is really that simple? I guess it doesn't matter sense we are all seeming at peace. Nate said he would think about giving us a real chance and not saying anything about our mermaidness. I guess I'm surprised that he won't just promise to keep it a secret. Why does he have to think about it?

Anyways, after that we each took a blow up bed, Zane sharing with me, and Nate on the floor. It seemed like everyone went to sleep easily except me. I couldn't find a comfortable spot, and it woke Zane.

"Rikki, are you alright?"

"I can't sleep," I say.

"Why not?"

"I don't know," I say.

"Okay, well I'm up now. Do you want to talk?"

"I guess."

"You know, I still have some questions," Zane says.

"Okay, shoot."

"The day at the seminar, you said that you were kind of afraid of the rain. You weren't really afraid of the rain, were you?"

"No, I just couldn't get wet in front of you," I say.

"And the full moon on Mako?"

"I can't remember anything about it, the full moon does that to us," I say.

"You know I bet Ash has lots of questions," Zane says.

"He probably does, even Will probably has questions, but Lewis knows pretty much as much as we do."

"Well, he's known since it happened, right?"

"Well, kind of. That day of Miriam's party was when he found out," I say.

"So, it's my fault he knows?"

"Kind of, but he was going to find out eventually, I'm sure. Cleo wasn't very secretive about our changes."

"Hey, wait, when she got me wet with the fire hydrant that was when she discovered her power?"

"Yup. So, any more questions?"

"What happened that day the comet came?"

"We used our powers to create a tower of light that hit the comet, and sent it away. We were lucky that you saw us, and got everyone to leave or it might not have happened," I say.

"I'm glad that I managed to help you. What happened before that? What happened during that full moon that I let my ego get the best of me?"

"I was upset with you, Will had offered to change it to his boatshed, and as we started back for the café, he said, 'at least there I can protect you.' Well, you of all people know that I don't need protection or that I don't like people wanting to protect me. So, I got angry at him, and took off. Somehow, as the tentacle appeared, it was listening to me, and then Will came and I saved him. I guess I felt like suddenly it was good and if I spent more time there, I could figure out what it wanted," I say.

"I'm sorry I wasn't more understanding. I should have asked these questions before and then we could have moved on," Zane says.

"I know. It's late, let's go to sleep," I say then kiss him on the lips, and say good night before falling instantly asleep.

****Bella's POV****

I woke up to the smell of pancakes drifting down the stairs. I sit up and look around; Rikki, Emma, and Cleo still seem to be sleeping. So, I get up quietly and head upstairs. I see Nate is cooking pancakes, and Zane is making coffee.

"Well, this is nice to wake up to," I say.

"Thanks, I asked Zane if it was alright," Nate says.

"What made you want to cook pancakes?" I ask.

"I felt bad for reacting the way I did to you, and even the way I've treated Melanie and my son. I'm not totally okay with it, but maybe I can work on it. Maybe Melanie will forgive me," Nate says.

"What does she have to forgive? You told me that she raped you repeatedly, and forced you to be with her," I say wanting the truth.

"I lied to you. I did those things to her," Nate says refusing to look at me.

I can't believe him. Who lies about that? If he wants her back now, he doesn't deserve her. Even if she did try to hurt us last night.

"Hey, everything should be ready in about ten minutes; can you go wake everyone else?" Zane asks.

I nod and head down the stairs. I see Emma is already up, and grabbing everyone's dresses to get changed upstairs. So, I say, "Good Morning," as I walk towards Cleo.

"Morning, I'm sorry that I was wrong about Melanie," Emma says.

"It's not your fault, besides you are right now. She'll be all good," I say.

"Hopefully," she says before going up the stairs.

"Wake up Cleo, you're getting married today," I say.

"What time is it?"

"Eight o'clock."

"Crap, we better get going," Cleo says surprising me by shooting up, and getting up quickly.

I move over to Rikki, who looks half-awake already. "Rikki, wake up."

"Make me."

"I'll throw cold water on you," I threaten.

"I dare you."

So, I turn to go get some cold water, and when I make it back, she's still asleep so I follow through with my threat. Pouring ice cold water on her head. The next thing I hear is Rikki cussing me out.

"I warned you," I say when she finally stops screaming and turns to glaring. Then I walk away, there's no way she'll be able to sleep

now.

Once I reach the kitchen, I see six plates on the table and a stack full of pancakes in the center. Emma and Cleo are already sitting with coffee mugs and pancakes on their plates. I pick a spot, and load my plate with the pancakes as Zane hands me a cup of coffee.

Suddenly, we can hear stomping, and then Rikki appears looking just as angry as I left her.

"That was not funny!"

"I warned you," I say simply.

In response, I get covered in cold water. I look up angrily at her. "I win," she says. "Now we are even."

I glare at her, and motion for her to dry me off.

We all sit down, and eat breakfast quickly. I take Cleo upstairs to do her hair and makeup. She then does mine, and Emma and Rikki did each other's.

Half way through my makeup, Kim comes to the door to get her hair and makeup done.

By 10:00, we are all dressed and ready.

Will had his boat ready for the five of us to travel over to the ceremony at Mako. So that nothing ruined our dresses or hair and makeup, Zane drove us over to the marina. Will had built a staircase so that we wouldn't have to risk getting wet or anything ruined. We all carefully board the boat, and go to the inside cabin. We can't risk getting wet at this point. Then we take off since the actually wedding starts at 11am.

****Cleo's POV****

As we head off towards Mako, I realize that this is it. I'm actually marrying Lewis. To think that during my dad's wedding I was crying because Lewis was going to America, and we were over, but now I'm marrying him. I wish we could have had more time engaged and thinking through every detail of the wedding, but I'm glad that we get to do it today.

Today was the day we first met, back in kindergarten, and became best friends. Of course it took about ten years until we felt something else for each other and got together. Now today will forever be our anniversary.

"Hey, we should take some pictures of us before the wedding," Emma says.

"That's a great idea," I say.

So, we all gather and start taking serious pictures then silly pictures. The boys all joined in except of course Lewis, who was on his own separate boat so he won't see me in my dress before I'm walking down the aisle.

Before we know it, we've arrived at Mako. We were all surprised at how long it takes to come here in a boat compared to swimming. My dad and Sam come aboard. Sam makes sure that we are all set to go, and tells me how happy she is for us, then she leaves. The boys also leave to take their seats as we all line up. Lewis's brothers stand at the bottom of the stairs waiting which girl they are supposed to walk down the aisle. My dad goes to join them as the music starts.

Kim starts down the stairs looking confident and smiling hugely. When she gets half-way, Bella makes her way down the steps and putting her arm through the next brother's. Next goes Rikki, followed by Emma and Lenny, who are the maid of honor and best man. Finally, it's my turn.

I make my way towards my dad and down the steps, he's smiling at me. Truly happy that Lewis and I are getting married even if it's a little soon. I reach the bottom step, and loop my arm with my dad's and we face the aisle. Everyone is facing us as the traditional wedding entrance song plays, and I make my way down the aisle. At the front, I see Lewis's parents beaming, as are Sam and Kelly.

My dad and I reach the officiant and Lewis, and the officiant says, "Who gives away this young woman?"

"I do," my dad says as he kisses my cheek, and places my arm in Lewis's waiting arm.

"We are gathered here today to join this young man and woman in holy matrimony. Is there anyone who would like to object to this marriage? Speak now or forever hold your peace."

No one speaks, and I'm thankful that Charlotte is locked away for a few more years.

The officiant continues. He speaks about how important marriage is and how we should follow our vows. We wrote our own vows, and I say mine first. "I vow to always be your best friend like I have been since this day when we were five years old. To love you more each and every day, and to never lose faith in our love just like when you went to America. I love you."

Then Lewis, "I vow to always be there for you no matter what strange things may happen. To stand by you no matter what trouble may bring us down. And to love you just like I have since the day I fell in love with you. I love you."

"Will you, Cleo Satori, take this man to have and to hold, in sickness and in health until death do you part?"

"I do," I say.

"And will you Lewis McCartney, take this woman to have and to hold, in sickness and in health, until death do you part?"

"I do," Lewis says.

"May I have the rings?" Emma and Lenny hands us the rings, and Lewis goes first, "With this ring, I do wed."

Now my turn, "With this ring, I do wed."

"I now pronounce you man and wife. You may kiss the bride."

Lewis pulls me into his arms, and kisses me passionately. After we break apart, the officent says, "I now give you Mr. and Mrs. Lewis McCartney."

We run through the sand to the boat the girls and I were just on, which now has a banner that says, "Just Married!"

Since we are supposed to be the last to arrive at the reception, we take a boat ride around Mako first.

****Emma's POV****

As soon as they got on the boat, and we waved them off, the girls and I got on another boat. We have to make sure everything is all set for the reception. We go there soon enough, and everything was all ready so we had to wait for everyone else and the happy couple to arrive.

As they do, everyone runs up to them and congratulates them. Before we know it, dinner has disappeared, and it's time for my speech.

"I've seen you guys as best friends your whole lives, and now I'm glad that you've made it through everything to this point in your lives. To Cleo and Lewis," I say raising my glass.

The girls and I drink from our glasses with straws, and we made sure that we had apple juice instead of Champaign.

Lenny does his best man speech, and then Bella leads the two of them to the center of the dance floor before going up on stage. Everyone watched until their songs ends, and Bella starts a new slow song.

Suddenly, there's a tap on my shoulder. I look up to see Ash, he holds out his hand as if asking me to dance. Should I? Should I really give him a third chance? I ponder this for a minute before placing my hand in his, and he leads me out to the dance floor.

****Bella's POV****

I smile as I see Ash leading Emma to the dance floor. Maybe things will go back to normal. I finish the song I'm singing and say into the mike, "We'll be taking a short break, but you'll still get to hear some different songs." Then Nate hits the CD player, and another song fills the air.

We get off the stage, and I grab Will's hand to dance. As we are dancing I see that Nate is at the door with Melanie, Will sees me looking and nods in that direction letting me know it was okay to see what was going on. I kiss him, and head over to Nate and Melanie.

"Why are you here?" I ask.

"I wanted to talk to you," Melanie says.

"Me?"

"Yes, I wanted to apologize. I realized that you were right about my motives for being here, kind of. Subconsciously, I was trying to get some guy, any guy, in this case it was Ash to want to love me and marry me. To be a father to my son. I told you that my dad disappeared; well he came back when I got my scholarship for school. Told me that if I got married, and he finally had a son and grandson, he would accept me. So, I came to school, and met Ash. I should've backed off when I found out about Emma, but I was selfish. I knew about my mermaid condition, that I would freak out at being rejected, just like last night. That's why I couldn't face Nate; I knew I would hurt him. Even now I try to pretend that I'm okay, but I'm still depressed, and upset about his rejection. So, I came to apologize, and promise to leave you girls alone."

"Well, thank you, and maybe we could help you," I say.

"Really? You would do that for me?"

"I'd consider it, and I know Emma would," I say.

"Not if you tell her that I wasn't actually interested in Ash like that. Just pretending so he would want to marry me and be a father to my son and no others," Melanie admits.

"Then maybe you should talk to her."

"You're right."

I turn around to go back to Will, and I hear Nate ask Melanie if she would talk to him, give him another chance. I didn't bother to listen to her answer, he's her problem now.

****Rikki's POV****

The night went well. We celebrated, and took pictures and danced. It was amazing. Zane had stars in his eyes, and kept saying what he would want for his wedding. I kept asking what he was talking about. He hasn't asked me to marry him, but he's acting like he has.

Should that bother me? Do I really want him to just pop the question? I thought I didn't want him to? Like he would only do it because he loves me. We wave goodbye to Lewis and Cleo as they head off to their honey moon in Cairns.

Everyone goes back inside as I continue to look me in the eyes and whisper, "I love you so much."

"I love you too," I whisper back.

"Then marry me."

"What?"

"Rikki, I love you. Marry me."

"Are you asking or telling," I say.

"Rikki Chadwick, will you do me the honor of becoming my wife?"

I look him in the eyes, feeling all my doubt wash away and say,
"Absolutely."

A/n thank you for reading, please review. I'm hoping to get the next chapter up before the weekend

21. Love is in the air

Chapter 20: Love is in the Air

A few days later

At the cafÃ©

Emma's POV

I was working today, and I noticed that both Bella and Rikki seem to be acting weird. Since the wedding, both seem to be hiding something. I tried to trick Bella into telling me what she was hiding, but she wouldn't.

I think I know what Rikki's is at least about. She seems to get super happy and excited whenever she sees Zane. That didn't used to happen, so whatever it is has to do with him. Which means two things: one it must be about the kids or two it has to be about their relationship.

Suddenly, as I stand at the counter, I find that a teddy bear with a box of chocolates is sitting in front of me. Knowing that this is one of Ash's method of getting me to decide to give in to him, I just accept it and say thanks. He keeps saying that he wants to love me, that we could love each other and start all over, but I don't know.

I danced with him at the wedding giving him the false impression that we were just going to become a thing again just like that.

I told him that we just can't go back to that. We just can't go back to being the happy lovey dovey couple again. So, he decided he would try to convince me.

"I appreciate the teddy bear, but could we please take this slow. We aren't even dating yet. If we are going to start over then we have to completely start over. That means our first date isn't until Friday, so you shouldn't be buying me gifts," I tell him.

"Maybe I'm just an eager beaver."

"Maybe you could back off a little bit," I say.

"Okay." He clocks in as I clock out taking the teddy bear with me.

At Emma and Bella's apartment

****Bella's POV****

Melanie, the liar, as I've nicknamed her, won't leave me alone. She's worried I'll tell Emma what her true intentions were and Emma will hate her. So, she sticks by me. Hoping that I'll see that she's good enough that it won't happen again.

Well, I've had enough! She will talk to Emma today because I know she'll be here any minute, and I will force Melanie to talk.

Suddenly, I see the door handle twist and Emma appears. Holding a teddy bear, and looking surprised.

"Well, I have to go, hi and bye Emma," Melanie says getting up.

"I don't think so, you need to tell her," I say making it obvious that she's hiding something from Emma.

"Tell me what?" Emma asks.

Melanie takes a deep breath and explains what she told me at the wedding. Emma looks appalled, but yet understanding.

"I'm upset that you picked the one guy that had a girlfriend that was pregnant and you didn't care, but I do understand why you didn't want to give up on him if you would finally be accepted. However, surely what you've been through should have made you feel guilty about it," Emma says.

"I know, I'm truly sorry, and I would never do that again. Even if Nate and I weren't trying to work things out," Melanie says.

I wouldn't have forgiven her for everything she did, but of course Emma does.

"It's okay, we can still be friends," Emma says.

"Thanks, that means a lot," Melanie says smiling.

"So, you're getting back together with Nate?" Emma asks.

"We are working on it. Starting over because he did love me, he was just appalled by my transformation. Nathan needs his father, so we are going to try. Honestly, I do still love him, and I thought if he did see me that he would realize how much he loves me and come back," Melanie says.

"Well, I hope you are in luck. I'm going to meet up with Will, and hang out with him for the day," I say before getting up and leaving.

****At the caf  ****

****Rikki's POV****

Since Zane proposed to me all he can talk about is the wedding and the twins. I'm pretty excited too, but I don't want Cleo to be left out in the excitement, so we are waiting for them to get back to tell everyone.

I asked him the next day, if he planned it, but he said no, he's been waiting since that day with Sophie to ask me by carrying around the jewelry box. When I asked why, he said 'you never know when the right time could come.'

Suddenly, Zane comes into the office where I'm sitting and says, "How's my lovely fiancée today?"

"I'm good, but we are keeping it a secret until Cleo and Lewis get back, remember?"

"Yah, but no one cares to hear me, and if they do, it's not some big surprise, so no one will care to talk about it," Zane says.

"If you say so," I say.

"So, you want to go for a walk on the beach?"

"Now?"

"Yes, Ash is working, and he could hold the fort," Zane says.

"Are you sure?"

"Come on. I can be romantic, but you're not allowed to ruin it."

"Alright, let's go."

He tells Ash that he's to hold the fort, while we go out, and that he will at least be back later. He grabs my hand, and leads me to the beach.

As we start to walk along the beach, I say, "So, are you going to talk to me or just walk next to me?"

"You don't like just holding my hand?" Zane asks.

"I do, I just feel like if we are going to be walking together than we should be talking," I say.

"What about the peace and quiet?"

"If you wanted peace and quiet, why didn't you go by yourself?"

"Because I'm trying to be romantic, and you're trying to ruin it," Zane says.

"How so?"

"By wanting to talk. It is possible to talk with someone without needing to talk," Zane replies.

"But it makes sense," I say.

"Well, maybe I wanted to wait until we eat," Zane says.

"We are going to eat?" I question.

He doesn't answer as he shows me the place where we normally dry off because it's secluded. As soon as I see the area, I see a blanket on the sand with lunch on top of it.

I was thinking about pretending that I didn't know that this lunch was for us, but before I could he says, "Don't even think about it."

"How do you know what I'm thinking about?" I ask.

"I just do," Zane says, "Now sit."

We sit down, and start to eat.

"This is nice, what made you decide to do this?" I ask.

"Well, I was just thinking I should do something nice for us. You know like a date, we don't really do that anymore," Zane says.

"Well, we are almost like an old married couple. And with kids on the way, are you surprised?"

"No, but I was just thinking about it, and I wanted to be nice."

"Well, this is lovely," I say, "Wow that is not something I'm used to saying."

"So, anyways, since you want to talk so much, what do you want to talk about?"

"Uh, I don't know. Do you know how badly I wanted to tell you about me being a mermaid the first time we were dating?"

"No, I didn't realize you ever wanted to tell me," Zane says.

"I did, at one point, but I was the one that said that we shouldn't tell anyone, and I knew I couldn't break my own rule."

"So, that's the only reason why you didn't?"

"No, after you were shouting, 'mermaid, mermaid' I knew I couldn't or shouldn't tell you. I'm glad I didn't. What if I had told you, the Denman situation would've been worse. If you had turned me over to them? I have no clue what I would do," I say.

"But you know now that I wouldn't have turned you in? I wouldn't do that to you," Zane says seriously.

"I know, but what about you dad? If he takes care of the twins one day he could want to make money off them by telling Denman, and experiment again," I say carefully.

"He won't. Maybe we can ease him into it? Talk to him about it. See if he still feels the way he did the last time," Zane says.

"I guess."

"Why don't we walk about something more happy, like us?" Zane suggests.

"What about us?"

"Well, we started off enemies, and now we are engaged to be married, and you're carrying out twins," Zane says.

"I bet this drives Mirium crazy," I say.

"It probably does, she hates losing and as she would say, 'especially to someone like you.' But she's so wrong. You're so much better than she is, and you didn't need money to be that way," Zane says.

"Thanks, was the money the only reason you were such a jerk?"

"No, I actually found you fascinating. I knew that my dad wouldn't approve, and you seemed to hate me so I just let it seem like I liked Marium."

"wow, maybe we should've said something sooner."

"You probably would've that I was pulling a prank on you," Zane says.

"Yes, I would have, but could you have blamed me?"

"No, so I have another question."

"Okay, shoot."

"Why did you believe me about the sharks?"

I take a deep breath, "I was there."

"What do you mean?"

"I knew there were sharks because I scared them away with my powers. I wanted to do my own film about sharks being the heroes of the deep."

"You know, that's when I realized that you were much better than anyone else for me. You saved me, Emma saved me. It seems like no matter what mermaids were meant to be in my life. You were meant to be in my life. Can you feel that?"

"Feel what?" I ask confused.

"The love."

"The love?" I question.

"The love in the air."

"I guess I can."

"I love you," we say together, and we can actually feeling the loving surrounding us.

****Friday, May 19, 2011****

****At Emma and Bella's apartment****

****Bella's POV****

I am helping Emma get ready for her date with Ash tonight. I want her to be happy, but I just don't know about Ash, I mean, with everything he's done, I just don't trust him. I think that Emma just wants things to go back to normal.

I, on the other hand, am staying in tonight because Will is making me dinner tonight. He says we haven't seen much of each other lately, and he's right. I've been so concerned about everything other than us, that our relationship is taking a beating. Besides, I have some good news to tell him.

As I am doing Emma's hair, making it kind of curvy instead of straight, there's a knock on the door. I open it expecting to see Ash since it's about that time, but it's Will.

"Hey Bella," Will says.

"Hi, Will, you're early," I say.

"Well, I could always leave and come back," he says jokingly.

"Nah, come on it. You can get started on dinner if you want," I say, "But I have to finish helping Emma get ready."

I do back into her room, and start to work faster. I'm almost done when there's another knock.

"Could you get that Will?" I yell.

"Sure," he yells back.

I finish Emma's hair and we walk out together. Ash sits on the couch while Will is in the kitchen making his gumbo he wants me to try.

"Emma, you look wonderful," Ash says.

"Thanks, are you ready to do," Emma replies.

He nods, and they leave. I sit on the couch until Will says that it's ready. We sit at the table, and begin to eat.

"Do you like it?" Will asks.

"Yes, it's great. Just like you," I say.

"Aww, aren't you sweet," Will says.

"Thanks, so anyways, I have some news for you."

"You do?"

"Yup, I went to the doctor today."

"And?"

"It's a girl," I say with a smile.

"That's great! My family, you, me and our daughter."

"I knew you'd be happy."

"I'd be happier if we were married, but I understand why you want to wait," Will says.

"I love you, Will. I just feel we are a little too young. Here let's go for a swim," I say since we finished eating. We leave, and before we know it we are at the beach running into the water.

As we swim, you could feel the love around us. The look in his eyes that just says that we share something so amazing, why would we ever want anything different. I use my hands to make a heart shape at him, and he knows that means I love you.

****At some restaurant ****

****Emma's POV****

"So, since we are starting over, tell me about you," Ash says.

"Don't you already know?"

"We are starting over, Emma. Are you going to be hard-headed now?"

"Fine what would you like to know?"

"I don't know, tell me about your family."

"Well, I have a twin, and a little brother. I found out that one of my best friends is my cousin, and my parents like to pretend to me perfect. What about yours?"

"Well, I am an only child. My dad passed away when I was young so it's just been my mom and me."

"Wow, I didn't know that. How did he die?" I ask.

"Boating accident. I refused to go swimming for a while after. That's why when I thought you were afraid of water I tried to help you," Ash says.

"It was thoughtful, but kind of backfired on you."

"I realized that, so everything strange that happened was because of that?"

"Pretty much, I mean when I got wet because your horse pushed me into the water through, when I cured said horse, when the girls invited you in during the full moon, when Zane tried to protect me from you finding outâ€¦all of it was because of it," I say.

"And the day you were attracted to Nate?"

"Also a part of it," I say.

"Wow, if all that happened since I've known you, I'd love to know what happened before," Ash says.

I laugh, and begin telling him from the second that Rikki and Cleo offered me a ride unto the moment I left for the trip around the world. He actually listened to me, every second occasionally interjecting with small statements.

"So, what happened after you left?"

"Honestly, here, I have no idea. They didn't tell me about anything really. Other than they met Bella, who has been a mermaid since she was nine, and has the jelly power. We really haven't talked about what went on in their lives. They barely talked to me, but somehow had nothing to say when I came back," I say still feeling hurt that I was never fully filled in.

"I know you're hurt, but I don't think they filled in Bella either, yet you're living together so maybe you could fill each other in?"

"Yah, I guess with everything else, we just forgot."

"See things happen, besides our girls are more important now," Ash says.

"I know, It's hard to believe how soon they will be here," I say rubbing my belly.

"I love them, Emma, I swear I do, I'm sorry that I choose flight instead of fight when I come across danger. But they aren't dangerous, and I made a promise to you that had nothing to do with Melanie," Ash says.

"I know, but it'll take time to trust you again," I say, but I'm thinking even if tonight was so easy.

I know that I felt deeply for him, and it didn't just vanish when he left me. As he walks me home, we pass by Nate and Melanie, who look like they've fallen back in love despite everything that has happened with them.

If it takes them only one night to forget everything and move on, why can't I? I know that I'm having problems with it, but I went out tonight didn't I? I mean he did have to ask several times, but I did go. So maybe I should let my fears go. At my door, I whisper, "I love you." He kisses me, and whispers it back as I open the door. There sits Bella looking happy.

"How was your night?" I ask.

"I feel so in love right now, yours?"

"I guess love must be in the air because so do I," I say and the truth is, I actually can feel the love in the air.

A/n I'm ssorry that this is late, it's been a crazy weekend and this week will be crazy with finals. Hopefully you'll get something on Friday or Saturday. Please review and I have Emma's girls names, and Cleo's baby name picked out so if you guys want to give me suggestions for both of Rikki's babies and Bella's baby, I'd appreciate it. Also, do you guys want Melanie to stick around. Tell me in Reviews. Enjoy

22. Announcements

Chapter 21: Announcements

Monday afternoon, May 22, 2011

At the Marine park

Cleo's POV

I was just finishing my shift by feeding some of the dolphins. Lewis and I got back late last night. I had my doctor's appointment, school, and now work making me really tired, and I still have to meet with the girls to tell them the good news. I also have some other news that they might want to talk about as well. We agreed long ago that anything involving our secret should be talked about together first.

So, as I finish feeding the dolphins, I take off my gloves and make my way back to the office, but before I could reach the end of the dock thing Ronnie decided to soak me. I don't think before diving in and hiding under the dock. I realized that I must've yelled because Lori comes running out of the office, and looking around.

Still hiding, I hear Lori yelling for me. After a few minutes, I see him go into the office, and I let out a breath, but don't dare to move. Then he suddenly comes back in a diving suit, and jumps in. What am I going to do now?

As I try to think of another way to hide myself from Lori, I see Ronnie making a bunch of noise and movements to show that I'm here. I try to get Ronnie to go away, but it's no use. I see Lori heading my way probably because of Ronnie. I try swimming away, but in my haste to get away from Ronnie, I run right into Lori.

` he looks happy for a second before his eyes widen at my tail, and points to the surface, I prepare myself for the questions.

"Cleo? What is this?" Lori asks immediately pointing my tail.

"It's a long story," I say.

"Then we better get you dried off and into my office , you have a lot of explaining to do," Lori says.

At the moon pool

Rikki's POV

I got here early because I'm excited to tell the girls the news. I actually have a couple things I want to tell them, so I sit on the

rock ledge in the water, and wait for them.

Suddenly, Emma swims in, early as always, and pulls herself up onto the sand.

"You can sit in the water, you know," I say.

"I like laying in the sand it gives my stomach more space, like it's not scrunched up," Emma says.

"Are you sure that you won't feel out of the conversation?"

"Nah."

We then sit in silence until Bella swims in fifteen minutes later.

"Sorry I'm late guys, class want over, wait, where's Cleo?"

"Not here yet," I say.

"Aren't you worried? She's always here on time. Should we try to call her?" Bella asks.

"No, just give her a little bit, she was coming from work and it could've run late," I say.

So, we sit quietly for another 25 minutes before we are about to go search for her, she swims in, out of breath and looking stressed.

"Cleo! Where have you been?" Emma asks worriedly.

"It's a long story, and relates to my announcement," Cleo says.

"So, tell us," I say.

"Well, I had just finished feeding the dolphins when Ronnie got me wet so I jumped in. Well, I was so freaked out that I screamed, and Lori came out to find out what was wrong. I tried to hide, but it was no use, Ronnie gave me away. So, he saw me, and demanded I tell him everything." She takes a breath. "We dried off, and went into his office, and leaving out you guys, I told him everything."

"Oh Cleo, are you alright?" Emma asks.

"Yes, he told me that he wants to think about this. He knows I won't ever be able to do my dolphin training in the water, so I don't know what's going to happen, but he said he won't tell anyone until he talks to me again on Thursday," Cleo says.

"It'll turn out alright," Emma says being the always supportive one.

"Actually, I was thinking about telling him anyway, so this should at least tell me if I was right. Actually, it's why I wanted to talk to you all about today see what you thought," Cleo says.

Now's my time to talk to them about telling someone else, too.

"I would've said no because too many people know now, this secret isn't a secret anymore," Bella says surprisingly.

"Well, I support you. Some people just end up needing to know," Emma says encouragingly.

"It's one to one, what about you, Rikki?" Cleo asks.

I take a breath. "I'm glad Emma said that some people need to know because I support you, Cleo, and I hope you'll support me."

"You want to tell someone, too?" Bella asks.

"Yes, I want to tell Zane's dad," I say.

Immeadately, Emma and Cleo freak out. Rambling about what happened the last time he found out, and Bella just sits there confused because we have never talked about what has really happened before she came here.

"Calm down! Let me explain, please," I say.

They both fall silent, and look at me expectantly.

"I'm not going to tell him right out. I want to ease him into it. He changed a lot since then, and I just don't want to worry every time I leave my son and daughter with him. Since my family found out, life has been so much better, but Zane's dad really wants to help us while we are in school, and I can't worry about him seeing them as a merman and mermaid while I'm not there. At least give it a thought," I finish.

"Same thing as Cleo's, it's a bad idea," Bella says.

"Only if it's a slow transition, and he seems understanding, and won't hurt us," Emma says.

"Emma's right, besides I can't really say no after you supporting me," Cleo says.

"Great, so we will work on it," I say smiling.

"Any more news?" Emma asks.

"We are having a girl," Cleo and Bella say together.

"That's awesome," Emma says.

"Guess my son will be surrounded by girls," I say.

"Oh, he'll love it, no doubt," Bella says cracking a smile.

"Oh, and one more thing. Zane and I are getting married," I say with a smile.

****Bella's POV****

As Rikki's last news it my ears, I get mad, but I force a smile anyways. The other two are astatic, and I pretend to be until Emma

and Cleo leave.

As Rikki goes to leave as well, I say, "How could you?"

"How could I, what?"

"When Will proposed, I said no because you told me that we were too young and he was only doing it for the baby! Yet, you can get engaged," I say angrily.

She pauses. "We are in two completely different situations."

"You and Will had been together for a few short months, you were barely together. Zane and I have been together for years. Off and on, yes, but he loves me with or without the twins," she says before leaving.

I just glare after her. What a hypocrite. I swim around Mako, and start to calm down, could she be right?

I love Will. I know I do. He loves me, could the amount of time we've been together affect anything? Everything seems all peachy now, but things have changed since I found out about the baby.

Yet, we still hold onto the love we share. We haven't resorted to blaming each other—I don't doubt we'd marry one day, but do I want to know we rushed it because of the baby? I don't think so.

****At Emma and Bella's apartment****

****Emma's POV****

I had just started dinner, Bella wasn't home yet, and there was a knock on the door. I answered.

It was Ash.

"Hey, Ash."

"Hey Em, I was just wondering if you needed anything?"

"No, I'm fine. You don't have to be here all the time. The girls aren't here yet," I say.

"I know, but I wanted to remind you that I'm here for you."

"I know that, but you need to be here when the twins come."

"I will, can I help you with dinner?"

"I'm fine, Ash. Seriously, what's up with you?"

"I don't know how to tell you—"

Oh no, he's leaving me. "Just say it."

"I got an internship for the summer holidays," Ash says.

That was unexpected. "That's great! But why did you make it sound so bad?"

"It's in Sydney."

"You're leaving me, and going to Sydney?"

"No, no. You can come with me, you and the girls," Ash says.

"I can't just move them to Sydney for I don't know how long. This is my home, I have a job here, and my friends are here. I won't leave," I say.

"It's only for two months."

"What happens if they like your work," I say.

"We will cross that bridge when we come to it. I'm not even going for six months. I thought you would jump on it," Ash says.

"I have to think about my children, and you should too," I say.

"Please at least think about it," Ash says pleadingly.

"I guess I can do that, but please leave," I say.

"Thank you for considering it," Ash says before kissing my cheek, and walking out the door.

This is a great opportunity for him, but I can't just up and move.

What am I going to do?

****At the McCartney's****

****Cleo's POV****

On the swim and walk home, I have been thinking about how to tell Lewis everything that has happened today. Do I just blurt it out? Do I lead into it? He might ask what the gender is without me having to bring it up.

I sit on the couch waiting for Lewis to get home. I wanted to make a nice dinner for our first night in our home as a married couple, but after the craziness of today, I just ordered pizza.

Ding Dong.

I get up and answer the door. I pay the delivery guy, and turn to put the food in the kitchen. As soon as I close the door, it opens with Lewis coming home.

"Smells like I'm right on time," he says.

"Yes, perfect timing," I say.

We get ourselves something to drink before sitting down at the table.

"So, what made you decide to order pizza?" Lewis asks.

"It's been a rough day. Sorry, I really wanted to do something nice for our dinner, but today was stressful," I say.

"Aww, it's alright. Why don't you tell me about it?" Lewis asks.

"Okay, but tell me about your day first," I say.

"Well, the American Institute is opening a research center in a little town like 45 minutes south of here that they want me to work at," Lewis says.

"That's Awesome!"

"Yah, I was pretty excited about that, so my day went well. Now tell me what happened with you," Lewis says.

"Well, it's a girl."

"That's awesome," Lewis says with a smile.

"And then I ended up in the pool at work, and thanks to Ronnie, Lori now knows about me," I say biting my lip.

"What? What did he say? Did you explain everything?"

"Slow down. I told him everything and he said that he needed time to think, and he's let me know what's going to happen on Thursday, but he won't tell anyone until then," I say.

"I'm sure it'll all work out. I know that it wasn't ideal especially when I know how tired you are of the secret," Lewis says.

"That's not all."

"What else happened?"

"Rikki wants to tell Zane's dad, and I told her she should," I say.

"I know that he was the wrong person to find out the first time, but I'm sure he's changed. Zane and his dad both changed after that, and he might be more understanding now. I don't think he'll hurt you girls this time around," Lewis says.

"You really believe that?"

"Absolutely."

We move into the living room after dinner, and the topic changes to our daughter, I'm glad I have Lewis to make everything better.

****At Rikki and Zane's place****

****Rikki's POV****

After the fight with Bella, I came straight home. I walk in to see Zane setting the table, and it hits me, my family and his dad are coming over tonight so that we can tell them the news. Great.

Zane must've heard me come in because as soon as the door closes I hear, "Hey honey."

"Hey," I answer.

"Where have you been? Our families should be here any minute," he says worriedly.

"Sorry, we had to wait on Cleo. Something happened at work, and we waited on her," I say. I was going to continue, but the doorbell rang.

I go to answer it. It's my family.

I welcome them in, and tell them to have a seat at the table, while I finish helping Zane since I didn't help him with it at all.

Zane and I get everything on the table as the doorbell rings again. Lizzie offers to get it.

Suddenly, we hear, "Rikki? What happened to the babies?"

I walk over to Zane's Dad and Lizzie, "They are right here," I say petting my belly.

He looks at me, then her, then me, and says, "Have I missed something?"

"Mr. Bennett, come on in. We will explain everything," Lizzie says.

So, we lead him to the table, where he greets my dad. I forgot that since mom and Lizzie came here, we haven't been all together like this.

We all sit down, and I introduce Zane's dad to my mom and sister.

"So, why haven't we met before?" Zane's dad asks.

"Well, it's a long story, but they have lived in America all this time," Zane says quickly.

"Anyways, that's not why we called you here. We wanted to tell you the good news," I say excitedly.

"First, we are having a girl and a boy," Zane says.

"And second, we are getting married," I finish with a smile.

Congratulations all around, and we talk throughout dinner before moving to the living room to relax.

Zane's dad is so happy about having a grandson and granddaughter, he can't wait to see them, and take them to do all sorts of things including swimming. This makes me nervous so I make an excuse to leave claiming the bathroom.

While I'm in there, I hear two sets of footsteps, and voices.

"Zane, there's something you should know," Zane's dad says.

"What is it, dad?"

"I want Rikki to trust me."

"What makes you think she doesn't?"

"Her secret. I know she is still a mermaid, and I know she is against telling me after last time, but I've changed. Please tell her that I don't care how it happened, and I'm not interested in testing on her. She is my new daughter-in-law, and I've risen about wanting the money for a new discovery of mermaids," Zane's dad says.

"How did you know?"

"It's obvious if you know what you're looking for, just let her know."

"I will."

I can't believe he figured it out, and more importantly, he's going to keep us safe.

A/n sorry it's late, but I hope you enjoyed it, and please review. Let me know what you think, and if you want me to get rid of any character's you don't like. Thanks

23. Decisions made

Chapter 22: Decisions made

Thursday, May 26**th****, 2011**

At Cleo's parents' house

Cleo's POV

My dad and Sam invited Lewis and I over for dinner today, but Lewis couldn't make it. So, I came over, and I see that Kelly is here as well. They tried to convince her to stay with them, but she only does occasionally.

"Hey," I say to Kelly and Kim that are sitting in the living room playing a game.

I go to sit down, but before I do, dad calls us into the kitchen. So, we go sit in there.

"So, Cleo, how are you?" my dad asks.

"I'm good, I found out that it's a girl, and Lewis got a job at the new research facility," I say.

"That's great," he answers.

"I have something to talk about too," Kelly says.

"What's up?" I ask.

"I'm going back to America."

"You can't leave! This isn't fair," Kim yells then runs upstairs.

"I'll go talk to her," I say.

I go upstairs and knock on her door, "Kim, it's me, Cleo."

"Go away."

"Now why would I do that?"

She comes to the door, "How could you help, you left me, too."

"I didn't leave you. I'm still here."

"Barely. You've married with a kid on the way, and you've never around."

"I'm sorry. I could come around more. But if she needs to leave, let her. I'm sure she'll come back," I say.

"I don't want her to leave."

"She left her home randomly, intending to be back shortly, and she's been gone for months. She has to go back and fix things before she can stay here. And if she doesn't want to stay here, we can't make her. Why don't we go see why she's leaving," I say.

"Okay."

We walk down the stairs, and retake our seats at the table. Kim mumbles an apology about leaving like that, and tells Kelly to explain why she's leaving all of a sudden.

"It's not really sudden. I've been thinking about this for a while, and I know that I didn't finish high school. So, I'm going back to finish it, and graduate. Then if you still want me, I'll come back and go to college here," she says.

"We would always love for you to come back," my dad answers.

"How long will you be gone?" Kim asks.

"Well, I'm quite behind. I'm signed up for summer school, and I have to do a couple classes next semester, so probably December," Kelly says.

"You're going to be gone for 6 months?"

"Yes, but don't worry. We can write and Skype," Kelly says.

"Promise," Kim says.

"Absolutely."

This calms Kim down and we begin talking about other things going on when I get a text.

**I've made my decision. Come to my office ASAP.**

I guess it's time to face the music.

At the cafÃ©

Emma's POV

I'm trying to work to keep my mind off of Ash leaving me or wanting me to up and leave. I can't up and leave, I know that, but I don't think I want him to go either. Could I tell him not to leave? Would he listen?

I don't think so. He's going to do what he wants, and it is only for two months. He could just go and then be back before I know it. On the other hand, he could do so well or like it much better that he stays there.

I haven't talked to anyone about this. I don't want to sound like a jerk dampening on his dreams, but I need him here. He has to be here for his girls, right? I don't want him to resent them though or me for that matter.

I keep cleaning when suddenly Ash comes in. I haven't seen him since he told me. I try to avoid him, but I know he noticed me. Continuing my work, I try to move away, but it's no use.

"Emma, are you busy?" he asks.

` "Does it look like I'm busy," I say.

"No, I need to talk to you," Ash says.

"Well, I'm working," I say.

"Come on, Emma."

"Fine, what do you want?"

"I found out today that I can do my internship in Sydney, but if they like me, I can work in the office here," Ash says.

"So?" I ask.

"So, I'm going no matter what you say. It'll only be for two months, and if they like me, I'll have a job around here. Bye," Ash says than walks out.

He must have known that I would have gotten angry at him for making a decision without me. Especially when it will affect me, and my babies. I'm so angry that I can't focus anymore.

I look at the clock; it's ten minutes till the end of my shift. So, I'll wait it out, and after ten minutes of waiting, I clock out, and run of the ocean.

The ocean brings me peace, and I knew that I needed my peace right now.

****At Rikki and Zane's house****

****Rikki's POV****

It's been a few days since I overheard Zane's dad tell Zane that he knows about me. Zane, true to his word, told me what his dad said as soon as everyone left.

After he told me, I admitted that I had been considering telling him anyway. That if he was going to help us without twins, he could find out accidentally. I told him about my talk with the girls, and how I overheard their conversation.

"So, when are you going to tell him?" Zane asks.

"How am I going to tell him, is more the question," I say.

"Jump on a pool, and say you were right," Zane suggests.

"Ha-ha, very funny."

"I'm serious. Ask him to come over, tell him that I told you what he thinks is true, and then jump in the pool, and say you're thinking was right," Zane says.

"You think that's how I should tell him," I ask.

"Absolutely."

****At the moon pool****

****Bella's POV****

I made my decision. I took Will out for the best day ever. I only had one class this morning, and he ditched his last class for this. But I know he'll find it worth it.

I want him in the best mood possible so he'll be happy with my decision. He should be anyways, but just to be sure, I worked hard on today.

After a while of swimming around, I point him towards the moon pool. We swim in, and he's shocked to see the picnic I've set up.

"Do you like it?" I ask.

"I love it. This has been an awesome day. What did I do to deserve this?" Will asks.

"You've just been a great boyfriend and I just wanted to show you how much you mean to me," I say.

"Yah, and maybe one day, I'll be an even better husband," he says then looks at me in the eyes.

I give him the sad eyes he's expecting. He then says, "I'm sorry, Bella, I just love you."

"I just love you too. That's why I did this," I say pulling out a jewelry box.

He was sitting so I asked him to stand, and instead of him bending down on one knee, I do.

"Will Benjamin, will you marry me?" I ask.

He doesn't respond right way, which makes me believe that he must be shocked, and now I know how he felt proposing to me.

"Bella, are you really serious?"

"Yes, Will."

"Then, yes Bella, I will marry you," Will says.

"This is fantastic! But let's not tell anyone just yet. Rikki just got engaged and I don't want Emma to feel left out," I say, but truthfully I just don't want to hear a lecture from Rikki for a while.

"Okay, it'll be our little secret."

****Emma's POV****

I can't believe I just saw Bella and Will get engaged. And they are keeping it a secret for my benefit? That just makes me feel awful. They shouldn't have to do that for me.

I hope that she will realize that she doesn't have to do that for me, and actually tell everyone sooner rather than later. Maybe I should tell her I know? Nah, I don't want to ruin their day.

So, I turn around and keep swimming, feeling a lot better than when I ran into the water after Ash told me his decision. Just like with Bella, I shouldn't hold him back. Now I know it's only for this summer, that is 6 months away, I think I feel a lot better about it.

No need to worry about something farther into the future than I want to think about right now. I need to focus on the here and now, especially with my babies coming in a month.

****The marine park****

****Cleo's POV****

I quickly said goodbye after getting the text from Lori, and I promised to see Kelly before she leaves, and to visit Kim more, then I left.

As I enter the marine park, I suddenly get nervous. What if he wants to test on me or tell the world about me? I'll never have peace. I'll forever be in the spotlight. Things will just be crazy for a while if that happens. Before I know it, I'm at Lori's office door. Am I ready for this?

I pause. I need to remember that I'm not alone. Lewis promised to

stand by me, and I think the girls will support me. I'd support them and after all two of them told me it was a good idea. They'll back me up.

Now that I feel better, I should knock, so I do. Lori was waiting on me. He yelled, "Come in" almost as soon as my hand reached the door to hit it once.

I opened the door, and slid in the room. I'm afraid of what he might say so I try to stand as close to the door as possible. Lori sees this, and gestures for me to sit, but I don't.

"I won't hurt you, Cleo," Lori says.

"I know that," I say trying to sound confident.

"Please sit."

I nod, and move to the seat he gestured to and sit down.

"Alright, I'll start with this: I'm not going to tell anyone per say," Lori says.

"That's great, but what does the per say mean," I ask.

"You being a mermaid gave me an idea to help the dolphin shows," Lori says obviously excited.

"Oh no, you can't be serious," I say.

"Now listen here. We'll pay you twice as much as you're getting paid now. Maybe even triple," he says.

"I don't want money. Not to do that," I say shaking my head.

"No one has to know that you are a real mermaid," he says.

"What do you mean?" I ask curiously.

"Plenty of theme parks have people dress up as mermaids," he says.

"Okay, so have someone else do it."

"Cleo, it won't be the same. You're a real mermaid! You could actually be a part of the show. It would bring in so much money!"

"But if no one knows I'm real, it wouldn't matter, now would it?" I ask.

"But we don't have the tools to make a costume like that, we would tell the staff that we do, but we don't, you won't have to do it every day. Just like once a week in the shows, and maybe twice a week taking pictures."

It doesn't sound like he's asking, more like he's telling me what the plan is.

"You sound like you've got this all planned out," I say

slowly.

Before he can answer, someone walks in without knocking. I don't know who she is, but she instantly confirms my fears. I don't get a choice.

"Is this our mermaid?" she asks as soon as she sees me.

"Yes. Cleo, this is the owner of the marine park, Johanna Young. I was just talking to Cleo about our proposition," Lori tells her.

"It's not a proposition. This is her new job like it or not," she says.

"I don't get a choice?" I ask.

"Either you do this part time, you can still do dolphin training on other days or you're fired and we will tell the media about you," she says.

"Why would you do that?" I ask.

"Because I always get what I want, and I want you to be our mermaid," she says before walking out.

I stared after her in disbelief. Was she really threatening me? Do I take the risk? I have my baby to think about, and I can't let the girls be a risk for me even if they want to be.

Suddenly, I realize I don't know anything about when I'll be starting or how this will affect my baby.

"So, Cleo, I was hoping you'd love the idea so that she wouldn't threaten you, but you'll love it, and the extra money will really do you good," Lori says.

"Why did you tell her?" I am angry that he promised to keep it a secret until he talked to me.

"Well, I didn't exactly tell her."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you remember when Mrs. Getty's has those cameras installed? Well, they were installed over the tank you dove into, as well as cameras in the offices. Basically, you told her. I didn't plan on telling her, not without your permission, but it was out of my hands," Lori tells me.

This was all my fault. I had to have a job that required me to work around water. I couldn't just find a job where I wasn't consistently in danger.

"So, what about me being pregnant? I'm not going to start now, am i?" I ask.

"No, the owner wants to advertise it on the news and such to see how much of a turn out we can get, and since you're due in a few months we decided to wait until you are back from maternity leave," Lori

says.

"Oh so, I have a few months? And she's not going to tell the whole country that I'm a real mermaid, is she?"

"No. She will only advertise having someone as a mermaid in the dolphin show. And that you'll be doing autographs and pictures right after the show," he answers.

"You realize that to keep me as a mermaid, I'll have to remain wet, and I'll need help to get to the picture place," I say.

"Yes, yes. We will work out all the details when we get closer to the day."

"Alright," I get up to leave before it hits me.

"How are you going to explain to the other workers why I'm the only one with this job?"

"We'll just make something up," he says shrugging.

"What if they don't believe you?" I ask. I actually know a few that probably won't believe him.

"Then I guess we will just have to tell them the truth," he says like it's no big deal.

"We can't just tell people like this is nothing. This is a serious thing, Lori. I can't have everyone knowing about this," I yell suddenly furious.

"Calm down, Cleo. I will figure it out when we cross that bridge," Lori says.

"You better," I say before leaving.

I only have a few months of normalcy left, and I want to keep it like that. Normal.

**A/n thanks for reading and thanks for reviewing. Sorry it's late the next update will be after Christmas. Happy holidays! Tell me if you liked it, and if you want me to get rid of anyone in the story that you don't like. **

24. All things Baby

Chapter 23: All things Baby

A month later

At Emma and Bella's Apartment

Bella's POV

It's so funny to watch Emma waddling around trying to make sure that everything is ready for the babies. She's due any day now, and she is has been going into overdrive.

She can't stop talking about babies, thinking about babies, or anything possible to get ready for the babies. She's driving me insane. How am I supposed to relax my last month being pregnant when she keeps telling me we aren't ready!

I tried to tell her that I'd help her with the girls, when they come, but she's insisting that I don't help, I'd help, I'll need rest. I think she'll need me, but I promised to stay away unless she says so.

She also decided to tell me that she knows about my engagement, and that it hurts her to know that she's the reason that no one else knows. I told her that I lied to Will, that it has nothing to do with her; I just don't want to hear a lecture from Rikki, so I pretended I was thinking about her feelings.

Unfortunately for me, Will overheard the conversation about why I decided to propose to him. He told me that I was thinking about us, just about showing up Rikki. And because of that, I wouldn't be happy married to him.

He was so mad, and hurt that he went off on me for over an hour. When he finished, he gave me the ring I gave him back, and said that he thinks we are better off as a dating couple. Then he said he was going to need a few days, and he would call me when he was ready to talk to me again. That was three days ago.

"Where the heck is Rikki?" Emma shouts suddenly. She's still pacing, which looks funny in her state.

"She's coming, give her a break. She can't be with you every second until you go into labor," I say.

"What if I go into her labor while she's gone? She needs to be here, I need her," Emma says frantic.

"It's okay. Even if your water breaks, her new power will turn you back to human, even though you're wet. So, you're going to be fine even if she isn't here," I tell her.

"I know, but I'd feel a lot better if she was here," Emma says.

"Just relax, she'll be here soon."

****At the cafÃ©****

****Rikki's POV****

I was just finished the accounts when Lizzie comes in.

"What's up, Liz?"

"Well, I know you were trying to find out what you were going to do when you go into labor, and won't be able to concentrate enough to stop your tail from forming. Well, I found the answer!"

"Okay, are you going to tell me or what?"

"Well, since we are twins, I can kind of take your power temporarily

so that I can stop you from changing during labor," Lizzie says full of excitement.

"That's nice. One less thing for me to worry about," I say.

"You don't sound excited," Lizzie says looking disappointed.

"I'm going to have to essentially go through labor four times in two months," I say.

"But I made it better," she says giving me the sad eyes.

"Thank you, Lizzie. For trying," I say as my phone goes off for a text.

It was from Bella.

`_**Emma's going crazy. Please come fast.**_`

"Crap," I say. "I totally forgot about Emma. I have to go Lizzie, but thanks again."

I get up to leave, but as I leave the office I hear, "Just leave her. Obviously she doesn't love you or she wouldn't have done this to you." It's Sophie.

"I love her, Soph. I know she cares, she is just having a selfish streak."

Will? She's not talking Zane out of marrying me? They are talking about Bella?

"I don't understand how you're even attracted to her, she's weird. It's bad enough that she got pregnant by you, you don't need to marry that weirdo, too," Sophie replies.

"I love her! I will marry her one day, and you need to get over that! I wanted you to make me feel better, but you just use it as a hate on Bella free card," Will says angrily.

"I just want to protect you."

"Yah, sure. I have to go."

Will leaves, and I decide I need to get to Emma. I end up right outside the café when someone yells, "Rikki!"

I turn around. Sophie.

"Sophie," I say.

"So, I heard that you and Zane are engaged," Sophie starts.

"Yah, what's it to you," I say.

"I want to know when to expect my invite to your wedding," Sophie says.

Wow. She has guts. "Never. You'll never get one," I say flat out.

"Well, why not?"

"Really? Are you still interested in Zane and hate me?"

"No, of course not."

"Don't lie to me."

"Fine, yes, but I should still get to come," she says.

"No. Goodbye now."

I walk away. The nerve of some people. I know that if I invited her, she'll just object to our marriage. Just like it sounds like she will object to Will and Bella's marriage.

As I head my way towards Emma, I realize that I still haven't confirmed my mermaidness with Zane's dad. Should I tell him before or after the twins are born? I'm not sure, when I suddenly walk right into him.

"Sorry," I say.

"It's alright. It's my fault," Zane's dad replies.

"No, I should've been watching where I was going."

"It's fine, as long as my grandbabies are okay."

"They are. Actually, do you have a minute?" I ask feeling that now was the time.

"Sure."

"Good, I have something I want to tell you, but we need some privacy."

He follows me to our secluded part of the beach. I stand at the edge of the water, barely out of reach, but that doesn't mean anything.

"I want you to know that I trust you. I know you don't think I do, but I do. And I'm going to prove it," I say then turn around and walk into the water.

Once I'm far enough in, I do a mini dive and turn around so that I can see his reaction. Of course, he's not surprised, maybe a little at the color change, but otherwise understanding.

He smiles, "Thank you for telling me. It means a lot."

"As long as you keep it a secret," I say smiling.

"No problem."

"And you know your grandchildren are going to be like me," I say.

"I know. And I wouldn't want them any other way. Thank you for telling me, but I have to go."

He turns and leaves.

It's so tempting to swim right now, but Emma needs me. So, grudgingly I drag myself out of the water, and dry off.

****At home****

****Cleo's POV****

"So, what do you want to name our daughter," Lewis asks.

"I'm not sure, I mean, maybe we can come up with a name when she's born," I say.

"You don't want to come up with some names a head of time?"

"No, I think we'll be fine. Besides, I'm more worried about having to do the dolphin shows. Maybe I can keep her in me forever, and I'll never have to do it," I say.

"That's funny, but seriously, we need to focus on our baby," Lewis says.

"I am focused. I mean, we have everything bought for her, and her room is set up and ready," I say.

"But she needs a name," Lewis says.

"Not until she comes out," I say.

"Come on, don't you want to name her?"

"Well, I do have one idea," I say.

"Okay, tell me," Lewis says.

"Well, Kelly told me once that the name Catherine was very important to her for some unknown reason, and sense she can't be here for our daughter's birth maybe we can honor Kelly by giving our daughter that name," I say.

"Seems like a weird reason to name her that, but I like the name," Lewis says.

"Me too, but she needs a middle name, if you want to go with Catherine that is," I say.

"Yes, our baby's name is Catherine. So, what kind of middle name?"

"What about Anna?"

"Catherine Anna? No, doesn't work well," Lewis says.

"Emma or Emily?"

"No, it really has to flow together."

"Okay well you try one," I say.

"Marie. Catherine Marie, what do you think?"

"Wow, on the first try. That's great. You get to name our kids from now on."

"Nah, it just happened to work out," Lewis says.

"Sure."

"So, I have to go to work, but we need to figure out our schedules for when the baby comes," Lewis says.

"Well, maybe the girls will have some insight to what we can do. I bet Emma already had things set up last month," I say.

"Well, why don't you go talk to her? I'm sure that the other girls are there too," Lewis says.

"I guess that would be a good idea," I say.

So, he grabs my hand to help me up, and leads me out the door. He must be walking me to Emma and Bella's place.

"I thought you had to go to work?" I ask.

"I do, I thought I'd walk you to Emma and Bella's place since I should protect you and our baby, and I could make sure I got you there safe."

"Aww, how sweet, but I don't want you to be late," I say.

"Are you sure?"

"I'll be fine."

So, he kisses me, and tells me he loves me and he'll see me later.

I keep walking, and before I know it, I'm there. I knock on the door, and I hear, "About time," as Emma opens the door.

"I didn't know you were expecting me," I say.

"It's not you I was expecting, but come in," Emma replies. "Man, where is she?"

"Where is who?" I ask.

"Rikki. Emma's been spazzing for a while now, worried that she's going to go into labor, and Rikki won't be here to help her," Bella supplies.

"Well, she should be here by now. What's taking her so long?" Emma says.

"I don't know, but you need to relax. It's not good for the babies," Bella says.

"I can't relax! They can come out at any time now," Emma replies.

"Okay, well why you don't come sit down, and we can talk about what to do when they get here," I suggest.

She takes a breath and comes to sit in between me and Bella.

"Well, at least I do have that planned. I figured I'll be on leave from school for a month or so. Ash will still be going to school then we have alternating school schedules so one of us should always be here. Rikki hired a couple new people to take over for us because among the four of us, she figured we'd be too busy for at least a few months. She also said that she'll put me back on the schedule when I'm ready. Ash, however, will still need to work sometimes so I have enlisted Jenna's help to babysit."

"Wow, you really do have a plan," I say.

"Surprised?"

"No, but Lewis said we needed a plan, but unlike you and Rikki, my twin left," I say.

"But I'm sure Kim will help," Emma says.

"She has school, too. And we can't let his family near her for fear they might find out," I say.

"Well, at least you have someone, the only person I have is Sophie, and we aren't going to let her find out," Bella says.

"What about your sisters?" I ask.

"Bethany went home to America. Even though things were getting better, she wanted to be happy. She told me she'd write and maybe visit, but I'm not holding out for her," Bella says.

"What about Diana?" Emma asks.

"She got into the University in Sydney, and she's moving there. She's already started taking a class to see what it's like," Bella says.

"Well, I'm sure she'll come visit you," I say.

"Yah, I know. It's kind of better without them. You know—almost back to normal," Bella says.

"But it'll never go back to normal, you know about them now," I say.

"I knew about them before, and I ignored them," Bella says.

"Oh right. I forgot that you know. Anyways, we are going to be mothers, our lives will never be the same," I say.

"Maybe they can be," Bella says.

"I guess. At least if I need to, I'll have you girls and the guys," I say.

"The only problem is that we all have our own babies," Bella says.

"Do you know what you're naming them," I ask to both Emma and Bella.

"No, not yet. Will and I haven't really talked about the baby recently," Bella says.

"I have their names picked out, but it's a surprise," Emma says.

"That's great, Emma. Why haven't you talked about it Bella?" I ask.

"We've been having some more distracting problems, but there's no need to worry about it," Bella says.

"Okay," I say and we continue talking about the babies, and how our lives will change.

****Emma's POV****

Where is Rikki? Since Cleo came in, I've been more relaxed. It helped that she was talking in a soothing voice and attempting to distract me. It only kind of worked because I was less focused on Rikki, but I was still thinking about where she could actually be.

Even though I could go into labor any day, Ash and I haven't talked about whether or not he's going to be in the room. He is the dad, and we are dating again, so he should be there, but we only did it once and I'm not sure I'm comfortable with that. He should be another one that is here with me. I mean I could essentially pop at any moment. Seriously, where is Rikki?

Suddenly, the door swings open to reveal where she is.

"Bout time!" I say.

"Sorry, I got a little distracted, but I'm here now," Rikki says.

"And it's a good thing," I say.

"Why?" Bella asks.

"It's time, I'm going into labor"

****A/N thanks for the reviews, particularly the one about Cleo's dilemmaâ€¦I never thought of thatâ€¦.and it gives me something to consider. ****

****So, I hope you all enjoyed this chapter. PLEASE reviewâ€¦it could really make the story better. :)****

25. Labor Pains

Chapter 24: Labor Pains

****Hospital****

****Same day 7:30 pm****

****Rikki's POV****

Emma went into labor about the hours ago. Since her water broke, I had to hold onto her to stop her from changing, but Cleo and Bella both went into preparing mode. Cleo went upstairs to get Ash, and Bella went to grab Emma's overnight bag.

Ash's face when he came in, and saw that Emma was in labor was great because it was pure shock. He got over it though, and helped us to his car, so we could get to the hospital in time. I guess we didn't have to hurry.

Because now, three hours later, she still hasn't had the twins. I've been sitting in her hospital room to make sure that she doesn't change. I'm not sure what would make her change now, but I need to be here to make sure the babies come out as babies, and not mermaids. Our bodies weren't built to push tails out; they are a little bit wider than the babies.

Despite her water breaking, she still has a little bit before the babies come. They told her that she still has to wait, but she was too far along to be sent home. Her contractions are roughly 15 minutes apart, and her cervix is at 6 centimeters, and she only had to get to 10. Our doctor says it'll be roughly two to three more hours. Her labor is pretty slow and long.

Since I can right now, I'm going to call Zane and get some food.

"Hey Em, I'm going to step out for a bit, I'll be back."

"No, don't go, what if they come? I need you," Emma says.

"I won't be long, besides Ash is here," I say.

"Please don't go."

"I need to call Zane, I won't be far," I say before leaving.

I'm not sure why she's so attached to me right now, but I need some time out of that room. As I make my way to the lunch room, I dial Zane's number. It rings only once.

"Hey, where are you? Are you okay? It's been hours," he says right away.

"Hey, I'm fine. Emma went into labor, and we are at the hospital," I say.

"Oh okay. That's great, did she have them yet?"

"No, she's still a few hours off, so I was wondering if you could bring me a few things. She doesn't want me to even leave the room, so there's no way she'll let me go home," I say.

"Alright, what do you need?"

"Just some comfortable clothes and things to do while we wait. I'm also having cramps every once in a while, so can you bring me some Advil or something?"

"Okay, I'll bring all that, but are you sure you should take Advil?"

"Yah, why not?"

"The babies?"

"Would you like me to ask someone if it's okay?"

"Would you? It would just make me feel better," Zane says.

"Alright, I'll ask, but I'm eating first, so they don't tell me I can't eat that," I say.

"Why would they say that?"

"Because they are mean," I say.

"Alright, see you soon, love you."

"Love you too."

****Bella's POV****

I just talked to Ash," I tell Cleo.

"And?"

"It'll be another few more hours," I say.

"That will put it at about midnight," Cleo says.

"Not exactly, but still pretty late"

"So, what do you want to do?" Cleo asks.

"I want to go home. I mean, what am I doing for her here," I say.

"But what if it hurts her feelings?" Cleo asks.

"Well, Ash and Rikki are still here," I shrug.

"Yah, but maybe she's expecting us to stay."

"WE have class tomorrow, I'm sure she'll understand she's probably upset she's going to miss it," I reason.

"You sure?"

"Definitely, it's Emma. She won't be hurt that we aren't going to be here for the birth. Even when she is having them, we'll be in the waiting room anyways." I say.

"I guess this is true," Cleo says.

"Let's go tell her," I say.

We both get up, and go to her room. We enter and say hi.

"Hey," Emma and Ash reply.

"We are going to take off," I say.

"What? Why?" Emma asks looking crestfallen.

"It's getting late, and we have school tomorrow," I say.

"School? Oh yah, I forgot," Emma says.

"Well, you've been preoccupied," I say as she goes through another contraction.

"We've been here for hours, it's already 9:30, and there's nothing we can do for you. Besides, Rikki will be here and Ash," I say.

"It's already that late?" Emma says.

"Yes, but we will be back tomorrow after school, okay?"

"Promise?"

"Promise," Cleo and I say before taking our leave.

****Emma's POV****

Bella and Cleo left, and the doctor came in. She told me that we will be starting to push soon; I guess I'm about 9 centimeter, and I need to be at ten. She told me that it will probably be in about half an hour, maybe longer.

So, Ash and I sit in comfortable silence except for the grunts of pain due to the contractions for the next 30 minutes. Then after an additional 15 minutes, I start wondering, where is the doctor, and Rikki?

So, I ask Ash, "Do you know where the doctor and Rikki are?"

"No, do you want me to find out?"

"Yes, please, but there's something I want to tell you," I say.

"What?"

"I don't want you to be in the room when I deliver." I say biting my lip.

"You don't?"

"No, I'm just not comfortable with it," I say, "I'm sorry."

"It's okay, I wasn't totally comfortable with it either, but I was willing to do it for you, and our daughters," Ash says.

"Oh good, I'm glad you're not upset about it. I didn't want to hurt your feelings," I say.

"It's alright. You want me to go find out now?" he asks.

"Yes, please."

"About twenty minutes later, he comes in with the doctor and Rikki.

"Alright. You are ready, and we need to do this fast, so that we can get Rikki back to her room," Ash says.

"What do you mean, her room?" I ask.

"Well, she's kind of in labor, too," Ash says.

"What?"

"I'll explain later," Rikki says as Ash leaves, "We have to do this fast."

"Push," the doctor says.

I began pushing my first daughter out, and with the help of Rikki, I don't have to worry about her tail. It takes a few minutes, but she comes out as a human, although ten seconds later she has a beautiful blue tail.

Then I start screaming again as the pain hits me, and I have to start pushing out my second daughter. She takes a little bit longer, but after about ten minutes, she's out and getting cleaned up. It's over for now, and I know that I'm going to wait or a while before doing this again.

The girls are cleaned off, and one is handed to me, the other to Rikki, who is still by my side, and the doctor goes to get Ash.

"They are beautiful," he says.

"Yes, they are congratulations. Unfortunately, I have to go rather quickly since if my water breaks, my labor is going to be fast," Rikki says, "I'll visit in the morning."

I look to Ash, "Are you going to tell me or should I wait for her?"

"Wait for her."

"Alright," I say before turning my attention to our daughters.

"So, what are we going to name them?" Ash asks.

I've had their names picked out for a few weeks, but I haven't told Ash yet. So, I say, "Which one do you want to name first?"

"How about the one in your arms, since she came first," he suggests.

"Okay, I want to name her Lilly Anna Gilbert. Even though Anne is her middle name I want to call her Lillianne. Kind of make her middle name just as important," I say.

"I love that idea. So, what about this little one?"

"I want to do the same thing with her except her name is Rose Mary Gilbert," I say.

"I love it. I love them. I love their names, and I love you," Ash says smiling.

"I love you too, and I'm glad you like the names," I say just as the nurse comes in with the basinetts. We already talked to the doctor about having the babies stay with us instead of going to the nursery, where all newborns go.

"Here you go. I need to measure and weigh them, as well as get their finger prints and names for their birth certificates. I'll take care of them until tomorrow morning, you are advised to rest," the nurse says.

"Oh okay," I say then tell her which one is which, and then heed her advice, and close my eyes.

****Rikki's POV****

It's 11:45pm and I finally get put into my room, two doors down from Emma's. About an hour and a half before Emma's delivery, I was told that I was in labor, but I had no clue.

I had gone down to the lunch room, and gotten my lunch, when I got another "cramp". I set my lunch down because the pain, and grabbed my stomach. A nurse saw, and asked if I was okay. I told her that I was fine; I just kept having cramps for the last few hours. She politely asked if I was pregnant and how far along. I answered both those questions, and added that I was carrying twins. After learning that I was having twins, she informed me that twins often come early and that I'm most likely in labor. I was in denial. I argued with her for twenty minutes before Zane shows up, and calms me down. Since they really thought I was in labor, they let me eat before taking me upstairs. My water had not broken yet, but they were certain I was going to be too far along into the labor to go home. They had gotten me into a checkup room to make sure; I told them that I need my special doctor just in case. I was six centimeters, and my contractions were about ten minutes apart, and when my water breaks it'll be a quick labor. We were working on getting me a room when the doctor remembers Emma. So, we rushed to her room, the doctor knew why I needed to be there, and that Emma was nearly there, so when we got there, we hoped things went fast and now I'm here.

The doctor came in to check again, and said it should be soon, I'm at eight centimeters and my water should break soon, if it doesn't since there's no way I could keep my twins inside me, the doctor will have to break it.

I found out after Emma's delivery that my brilliant husband to be remembered that he needed to call Lizzie to do what I did for Emma, for me.

"I can't believe that I get to be a part of this with you," Lizzie says excitedly.

"I can't believe that it's happening so soon, I thought I had a week and a half before they were due," I say.

"You did, but they wanted to come early," Zane says.

"Well, it's not fair! Why should I have to go through two deliveries in one night," I say angrily.

"It should be over soon," Zane says.

"I'm only in labor right now, I haven't even started the actual delivery yet," I say.

"It'll be alright, Rikki," Lizzie says.

"Gee thanks," I say sarcastically.

Suddenly, I feel water around my more or less exposed area. I look up and Lizzie grabs my left hand as Zane goes to get the doctor. The doctor comes in with Zane, and quickly checks to see it is time.

She looks up, "It's time."

Zane quickly grabs my right hand, as the doctor says, "Push!"

I start pushing, groaning, and screaming obscenities at everyone in the room, specifically Zane since he did this to me. It only takes a few minutes before our son is born, I smile. I'm glad that he's born first since it'll be nice knowing he'll probably be the overprotective older brother.

I rest for a few minutes, while I can, until the doctor tells me to start pushing again. So, I go through the entire process again for the next ten minutes until my baby girl comes out. Once Lizzie sees her come out, she lets go of my hand, and I immediately change.

I sigh in relief as the nurse cleans my babies, and the doctor tells me I need to rest. The nurse then hand me my son, and Zane our daughter. Lizzie smiles.

"Can I take a picture?"

"No, I probably look like crap," I answer.

"Oh come on Rikki, our first family photo," Zane says.

"You realize I'm currently a mermaid, no one will ever see this photo," I say.

"Our families can," he says simply.

"Fine," I say as Zane moves close to me, and Lizzie moves to take the pictures.

"Smile."

Zane and I smile as she takes the picture, then the nurse says that she needs to do all the stuff they normally do when they take the babies to the nursery, but after she does all those things, she'll bring them back here.

After the nurse leaves, Zane says, "You should probably rest."

"Are you sure? We haven't even named them."

"We'll name them in the morning. Go to sleep, I love you," he says.

"I love you to, good night." I say before going to sleep.

****The next day****

****Two o'clock pm****

****Cleo's POV****

I am done for school for the day, and the weekend is here. I look around for Rikki and Bella knowing that we were going to visit Emma and her babies together today. I spot Bella in the courtyard with Will.

"Hey guys, have you seen Rikki?"

"Nope or Zane either. Maybe they just had a late night, and skipped today," Bella answers.

"Well, Zane doesn't have class on Friday," I say.

"Oh yah, well why don't we just call her?"

I know before dialing Rikki's number. It went straight to voicemail, "Should I leave a message?" At Bella's nod, I say into the phone, "Hey Rikki, we were waiting on you to see Emma and her girls, but we didn't see you at school so we are going without you, come meet up with us." Then I hang up.

"Alright, let's go," Bella says and we head out.

We get to the hospital within ten minutes, and since we already know which room Emma was in, we just headed there.

As we approach the room, we see Emma and Ash holding their babies, but leaving the room. I look to Bella, and she nods. We follow them. They don't go far, just a couple doors down. I see Ash knock, and someone opening the door. I hear him speak.

"She's still sleeping, but you can come in, the nurse should be here to bring the birth certificates soon."

"Thanks Zane how is she? Two deliveries in one night must have been hard," Emma says as they enter.

Bella looks at me, "Rikki had her twins?"

"I guess so, let's go find out."

So, we walk up to the room, the same time as the nurse, who knocks then enters without waiting for a reply. We follow her inside.

****Rikki's POV****

I hear Zane's voice nudging me awake. Then a stranger's voice saying it's time to name my babies. I open one eye to see that it's a nurse and that there are more than just those two in the room.

I suddenly find that I am really awake.

"Good morning guys," I say.

"It's good afternoon," Cleo says.

"Oh shush, it was a long night," I say.

"Tell us about it," Emma says.

I guess she's curious because I left her so soon after her delivery. So, I explain what happened with the nurse and my labor pains that I had no idea about. Zane occasionally interjects with his own comments. When the story is over, the nurse says she needs the names for the birth certificates.

Zane had handed me our son when he woke up so I looked down at him before deciding on his name, "James Anthony Bennett."

"Are you sure about the last name?" Zane asks.

"Yes, we will all be Bennett's soon. Now what about our daughter?"

Zane looks at our little girl in his hands, smiles, and says, "Maria Isabelle Bennett."

I love it. So, does everyone else. After that Emma introduces us to her children and we spend the rest of the time hanging out. Now it's time to see what being a mother is all about.

****A/N here you go, sorry it's a bit late. Please read and review they really help me along****

****To Chinaluv: thank you for always reviewing.****

****To Swimngym: thank you for your idea, and if you have any others please feel free to let me know. Thanks for the reviews too.****

****To: Avatar Kat: I'm glad that it went together and surprised you, I try to know where I want to end before I start a chapter. Also did Rikki having her babies surprise you? Thanks for your reviews.****

****Thanks to everyone else for reading and favoriting. Leave me a review and I'll talk to you too****

Chapter 25: The Woes of Motherhood

****A few days later****

****Emma's POV****

Unlike Rikki, the doctor let me and my girls out the day after the delivery. I guess they wanted to keep an eye on her and them since she essentially went through tow labors and the kids were two weeks early or in their words, preemies. She's getting out today, and will be introducing her kids to their new home and beds, whereas I've gotten the girls used to their new home and beds.

Even though the girls don't stay up all night, it's nice to know that I don't have to worry about school when they do wake me up in the middle of the night. At least I have a few months. They have something called maternity leave for expectant mothers. It'll cover me for roughly two to three months before I have to go back. I asked my professors if they could email me the work they will be covering so that I won't fall too far behind.

Today is Monday, which means everyone, except Rikki and I are in class. I learned to breastfeed, and we had everything set up for the girls to come home, so I haven't left.

It's been three days, and the only people I've seen are Bella and Ash. Ash has been here every day over the weekend, but he isn't off school, so he plans to come over after school, and be here any down time he has. Although he needs money to help with the babies so he's still working at the cafÃ© a few days a week. He can't afford time off, but I can because my parents did give me some money, and I'm not one to spend my money unless necessary.

Originally, Bella offered to help me, but when the girls started to cry in the middle of the night, she asked if it was okay if she spent the night at Will's for a few nights. I was hurt, but said okay.

The next morning, she apologized and said she didn't mean it, that she's still here for me. What can I say? I just accepted, we need to get along since we live together.

****Rikki's POV****

My kids and I were just getting checked out of the hospital. Zane already had my bag packed, and in the car. The nurse had told us that the twins were fine to take home and I am as well. So, Zane who hadn't left, helped get everything ready, and signed me out.

We make it home in ten minutes. Zane hands me James in his car seat, and the house key. I walk up to the house, place the key in the lock, and open the door.

"Welcome home," I hear as the door swung open, and there stands my sister, parents, and Zane's dad. I smile.

"Thanks guys."

I move in to the living room, and sit on the couch next to my sister, and mom. Zane comes in carrying Maria, and sits in between our dads on the other couch.

"We thought it would be nice to welcome you home," Lizzie says.

"Well it is nice. Do you want to hold James?" I ask.

"Sure," she says as I left James from his car seat, and hand him to her. I see Zane do the same with Maria, only she was handed to his dad.

"Oh before I forget I bought you something," Lizzie says then nods to our mom, and she hands me a present. I start to rip off the paper, when she says, "Wait, maybe this isn't the right time."

"Why would that be?"

She looks at me, and mouths, "Secret."

"Oh, don't worry about that," I say, and finish taking the wrapping off. It's our first family picture. I lift it up to show Zane, who smiles at first, and then his face falls, and he looks at his dad.

"I think it's a cute picture," Zane's dad says.

"Thanks," I say to him and Lizzie.

"No problem," Lizzie says.

"Uh, Rikki, can I talk to you," Zane says.

"Sure," I say and he grabs my hand, and leads me into the kitchen.

"Why did you do that? Now my dad knows, well you just confirmed it for him," Zane says.

"I forgot to tell you, I ran into him on the way to Emma's apartment, and I showed him that I haven't changed."

"Oh, so you're fine with him seeing our first picture as a family?"

"Yes, why not?"

"I don't know, I just thought you weren't sure about him knowing for sure, that you are a mermaid," Zane says.

"Why are you still whispering? He knows, that's it," I say.

"Okay, let's go back in the living room." We head back into the living room, where everyone looked so happy and excited.

It was so nice, and different. About an hour later, mom and dad said they had to go, and left.

Zane's dad was feeding James with a bottle, since I was having issues with breastfeeding. I know that breastfeeding is better for them, but at least it's nice to know that I won't necessarily be the one to have to feed them every time they are hungry.

"I have to go, but if you need me, just call, I'll be glad to help," Lizzie says before leaving with a wave.

"I should go, too," Zane's dad says.

"Okay, well thanks for coming," I say.

"No problem, I promise to come visit soon," says handing me James, and waving good bye.

"Did you like your surprise?" Zane asks.

"Yes, it was nice," I say.

"I'm glad. I'm going to go put them down for a nap, why don't you take a nap, too," Zane says.

"Okay," I say before heading up to our room.

****Emma's POV****

I just laid the girls down since they were getting tired again. I've been trying to make sure that they are almost on the same schedule to make it easier for me. The clock in the kitchen says its 3:30, and that means that Bella should be home soon, so maybe I should make some dinner. I'm starting to feel tired from the babies, so I decide to make something simple: pasta.

I put on the pot of water, and I heat up the oven for some garlic bread as a side. Just as I finish doing that, my phone rings.

"Hello," I say.

"Hey, it's Jenna, are you busy?"

"Uh, not really, just making dinner."

"Oh good, because you need to come to your door," Jenna says.

"What?"

"Just do it," Jenna replies.

"Okay," I say slowly as I make my way to the door. I open it to see Jenna, Eliot, and our parents.

"Surprise," they all yell.

"Wow, guys, come in," I say.

"Sorry that we haven't been able to come visit, but we thought we would do it now," Eliot says.

"Well, that's sweet of you guys. I just laid the girls down, but you're welcome to go to their room, and see them," I say.

"Thanks Em," Eliot says before grabbing my mom's hand, and taking her

into the nursery.

Jenna and my dad both give me a hug, and sit on the couch.

"How is everything?" my dad asks.

"Good, I would've kept the girls awake a little longer, if I had known you were coming," I say.

"Oh, don't worry about us, if they were tired, it's best they get sleep," my dad says.

"Thanks, how are things at him?" I ask.

"Good, it almost feels normal. Except you aren't there, and we know you are a mermaid, but your mom and Aunt are working on accepting each other. I think things with them are getting better," my dad says.

"And mom has invited me to dinner a few times, so it's going well there, too," Jenna chimes in.

"That's great! So, how's life here, different?" I ask.

"Very different. I did get a job though, and Lizzie is a great roommate," Jenna replies.

"You're working? Where at?" I ask surprised. I guess it's been longer than I thought since I talked to her.

"Yah, I work as an assistant teacher for the first graders at the lower grade school. They told me that I'll need some schooling, but I could teach for now, and learn some helpful tips before I go to school to learn more," Jenna says.

"When do you start school?" I ask.

"February, so I have a lot of time until then," Jenna says.

Suddenly, there's a cry through the baby monitor, and I get up to get whichever one it is, but before I reach the door, my mom comes out carrying Lilly-Anne. I know its Lily and not Rose because even though at first glance they are identical with my eyes, and Ash's nose, Lilly has this birthmark on her arm in the shape of a triangle. It's very light, but if you know it's there and are looking for it, you can see it.

"Thanks, I was just coming to get her," I tell my mom.

"That's alright, I've got her. You should relax, Emma, I'm a mom, too," she replies.

"Thanks, do you guys want to stay for dinner? I can put in extra pasta," I say.

"No thanks, we only came for a short visit," mom replies.

"Are you sure?" I ask looking to dad.

"Yes, but we will come by at the end of the week, I promise," dad says before getting up, and hugging me.

Mom hands Lilly-Anne to Jenna and hugs me, too. Eliot hugs me, too, and everyone, but Jenna leaves.

"That invite for dinner was for me too, right?" Jenna says with a smile.

"Yes, of course, as long as you don't have anywhere to go."

"Nope, I think Lizzie had to work tonight, so I told her that I'd visit you. This one is Lily right?"

"Yes, I call her Lily-Anne though, I really like to use their middle names," I say. I put the pasta, and bread in, and then say. "I'm surprised Rosemary is still asleep."

"Really? I thought you only just laid them down," Jenna responds.

"I did, but they don't sleep long. They are babies," I say.

"Oh yah," Jenna says then we start talking about life as I continue to make dinner. It's almost done when I realize Bella should have been here by now. Maybe she's running late.

Fifteen minutes later, dinner is done, and all set up on the table, and Bella still isn't home. I have Jenna put Lily-Anne in the rocker, and she has a seat across from me.

"Maybe you should call her," Jenna says after ten more minutes.

"Yah, maybe," I say picking up my phone and dialing her number, and hoping that she picks up her phone.

****Bella's POV****

After school, I went to Will's boatshed. It's only been two days, and I'm already frustrated with the babies crying all the time. I wish I could stay here for the next month until I have no choice, but I can't. I say how hurt she was, when I mentioned it last night.

So, I told her sorry, and that I didn't mean it, but I did. Is that bad? I should be supporting her, helping her like I said I would. It's fine when they are sleeping or anything else, but not crying. I know this is selfish, but I want this last month to myself.

I came here to Will's, so that I would have time away from Emma and her girls.

"Are you sure Emma's not expecting you?" Will asks. He's still unhappy with me, but he said he would try to be less unhappy so I won't be stressed out.

"Of course not, why would she be expecting me?"

"Well, maybe being home all day with no one to talk to would make her actually anticipate you coming home. Like a stay at home mom waiting for her kids to get home from school to have dinner or something,"

Will says.

"I doubt it. She's probably too busy with her daughters anyways," I say.

"I don't knowâ€|" Will says just as my phone rings.

It's Emma. "Speak of the devil," I say to Will before answering the phone.

"Hey Em."

"Hey Bella, where are you?"

"I went to Will's after school, why?"

"Oh, I made dinner. I guess I'll just eat without you," Emma says with sadness in her voice.

"I'm sorry, Em, honest. I didn't think you'd be looking forward to me coming home," I say.

"It's fine. I'm just going to eat now," Emma says then hanging up without a good bye.

"What did she say?" Will asks.

"She said that she made us dinner, and was waiting on me," I answer him.

"So, you're going to go home then right," Will states.

"NO, she's eating without me, and she told me that she's fine."

"Bella, are you seriously going to let her eat dinner by herself?"

"What? She told me that she's fine."

"Of course she says that, but does she mean it, I don't think so," Will says.

"Are you trying to guilt trip me now?"

"Yes, because that's what you need. Guilt for waiting to leave her after saying you'd be there for her," Will says.

I look into his eyes and see he's being serious. "Alright, I'll see you tomorrow."

****At Emma and Bella's apartment****

****Emma's POV****

I hang up the phone. So much for relying on my roommate for help, or just to be here for me.

"Let's eat," I say to Jenna.

So, we sit down to eat and continue our conversation from before the phone call.

"I'm glad you came over, I can't imagine how lonely I'd feel if you hadn't been here for this," I tell Jenna.

"No problem, you're welcome to call me any time you like," Jenna says.

"Really?"

"Yes, that's why I came here. To get to know you," Jenna says.

"Thanks, that means a lot," I say as the doorbell rings, and I hear Rosemary crying. I look to Jenna. "I'll get the door, you get the baby," Jenna says.

I nod, and go get Rosemary. As I come back, I notice that it's Melanie and Nathan, which surprises me as I was expecting it to be Ash. "Hey Emma, Nathan and I just wanted to come visit you," she says.

"Well, that's nice. This is Rosemary and that is Lily-Anne," I finish pointing to Lily-Anne in Jenna's arms.

"They are so cute. So, how's motherhood?" Melanie asks.

"Thanks and honestly? Boring. If it weren't for Jenna's surprise visit, I'd have ate alone since Bella didn't bother come home from school," I say.

"Oh the woes of motherhood. At least you have people there for you. I had basically no one," Melanie says.

"I'm sorry, but you guys are welcome here any time," I say.

"Thanks Emma," Melanie says.

Suddenly, the door swings open to reveal Bella. When she sees Melanie and Jenna, her eyes narrow.

"I thought you were alone! I rushed all the way over her because you were alone," Bella almost yells.

"Quiet down! I was alone; they came over, and surprised me. They actually care," I say angrily.

"I care too," Bella says softening at my explanation.

"Oh really? It doesn't feel like it," I say.

"I'm sorry; I'm not ready for this yet. I still have a month," Bella says.

"It doesn't matter if you are ready or not. We made a deal when we moved in together," I tell her.

"Well, maybe we should make a new deal," Bella says.

"Don't you think it's a little later for that?"

"No."

"Well, I do."

"Come one make a new deal with me," Bella says.

"Why should i? It's only going to benefit you," I say.

"Maybe it'll be good for the both of us," Bella says.

"Fine, what's you new deal?" I ask.

"I stay at Will's until our baby comes," Bella answers.

"So, after telling me that you'd be there for me, and not leave me alone you're going to leave me?"

"Only for a month max. It's really best for both of us," Bella says.

"How do you see that?"

"I don't have to deal with your babies, and you don't have to deal with me crabbiness," Bella says.

"That's not the point you said that you would be here for me. What happened to that Bella? The one who told me that you, me and Will could handle it without Ash?"

"She's frustrated, either way, you have Ash, and the three of us can take care of things when my baby comes," Bella shrugs.

"That wasn't the plan," I say.

"Oh well."

"You can't do it," I say.

"Yes, I can, and just for that. I will. I'll see you in a month," Bella says grabbing some of her stuff, and leaving.

I watch her go, trying to be strong, but this hurts almost worse than if Ash left me. What am I going to do now? I feel so alone.

****A/n Emma and Bella's first fight of many. I hope that you liked this chapter. Please review:****

****Thanks to everyone that does review.****

****Magic maker: thank you for telling me I don't have to worry so much about being on time. It made me feel good and I only work so hard on time limits because I don't want you get bored.****

****Chinaluv: thanks again for always reviewing**** and I had no idea what your name is, but I think that it's cool that it ended up that way, and I was just wondering is your name Mary Rose?****

****Zikki: thanks for your review; I'm glad Rikki's surprise labor was**

interesting. And I know that a lot of teen mothers who aren't married or going to be married to the father chose to give their child their last name, I think it makes it simpler for the older things in life like schooling stuff.**

Thanks again to everyone who has ever reviewed my stories or favorite them, if you review I'll give you a shout out, hope you enjoyed:

27. A Month Apart

Chapter 26: A month Apart

A week and a half later

Thursday, July 14**th****, **2011

At Will's boatshed

Bella's POV

Since my fight with Emma, I haven't seen her or bothered to talk to her. Will was upset with me, but I just couldn't deal with it. I told him that I don't regret what I did, and maybe we will be happier when our daughter comes. He told me that I was pretty stupid to believe that, and that I should go talk to her.

That was a week and a half ago.

I told him that I was better off not talking to her, and that I really needed to stay here. He let me, probably because I'm still pregnant. Oh well, it works to my advantage. I had to send Will to get some stuff for me that I left there, he tried to refuse, but one look at my belly changed that.

Suddenly, the door swings open. It's Sophie.

"What are you doing here? I thought my brother was mad at you," Sophie says as she spots me.

"I'm staying with him so obviously he's not mad at me," I say.

"Maybe he is, but feels bad for his kid."

"Either way, it's none of your business," I say.

"Okay, well, I can kick you out," Sophie says.

"No you can't, this is Will's boatshed."

"Which I pay for, or have you forgotten," Sophie says.

"But Will works tooâ€¦" I say faltering.

"No he doesn't. He only dives sometimes, and it doesn't pay the bills. Sure he got a job, but right now, I pay so I control who lives here," Sophie says.

"But butâ€¦" I say stammering.

"Anyways, you can't stay here. Go back to your place. Now."

I scramble to get up, and rush out to the boatshed. I call Cleo as I walk.

"Hey Bella."

"Cleo, can you meet me at Mako?"

"Sure, when?"

"Now."

"Okay."

"Thanks," I say hanging up, and heading towards the ocean.

****Cleo's POV****

After Bella's short call, I kissed Lewis, and headed for the ocean. I hope that she's alright, but then she must be if she wants to swim to Mako.

I get there quicker than I thought I would considering I'm pregnant, and sit on the ledge in the water. Suddenly, Bella comes swimming in, surprisingly fast considering that she could pop soon.

She catches her breath and then says, "I need a favor."

"Sure, anything," I say.

"Can I stay with you and Lewis?"

"Uhhhâ€¦I don't know about that," I say.

"Please, Sophie kicked me out today," Bella begs.

"Well, why don't you go back to your apartment and make up with Emma," I say.

"I can't do that."

"You're going to have to eventually," I say.

"Are you sureâ€¦"

"Almost positive. Lewis doesn't want to condone you leaving her."

"With good reason."

"Not really."

"So, you won't help me?"

"Sorry," I say before leaving.

I get out of there fast, and head to the cafÃ©, I really want a

juice.

****At the cafÃ©****

****Emma's POV****

Jenna and Melanie have been such a great help since the fight with Bella. Even though Melanie lives on the school's campus with her son, she's been spending as much time as possible with me and my girls. Jenna lives with Lizzie, who's been helping Rikki out, so they are both fine that they aren't really at their apartment that much.

Jenna and Melanie both convinced me that I should take the girls out today. So, we buckled them into their stroller and ventured to the cafÃ©. Ash is working, so it's nice that he could see the girls some extra time.

"Hey girls, what can I get you to drink?" Ash asks.

"I think we will all have some strawberry pineapple smoothies, thanks, Ash," I say.

"You're welcome," he says, kisses me, and goes to get them.

"So, you and Ash are doing well, I see," Melanie says.

"Yup, he taking to fatherhood a lot better than I thought," I say as Ash comes back with the drinks and Zane follows him.

"Here you go," Ash says.

"And as a special treat, Rikki asked me to give you a piece of chocolate cake," Zane says behind him, and moving so I can see.

"Rikki's giving me cake?" I ask.

"Yes, she said something about even a mother needs to feel good. I don't know, I think she just wants you to go visit her," Zane says.

"Why don't you tell her to bring the kids here?" I ask.

"Are you sure that's a good idea?"

"Absolutely, we'll help her, right girls?"

Melanie and Jenna nod their heads, and Zane says, "Alright, enjoy the cake, I'll give her a call."

He leaves, as Ash has a seat beside me, telling me that he has a break now. He takes Lilly-Anne from me, and starts to rock her. The girls tell me that don't want the cake, and that I should dig in. So, I do, and as I do, I see Cleo come in.

She sees me, too. She smiles, waves, and holds up a finger to show one minute. She walks up to the counter, and orders her drink. She waits to get it, and comes to our table.

"I haven't seen you in a while, how are you?" Cleo asks.

"I'm good, how are you?" I ask.

"Alright, I guess. Are you avoiding Bella?"

"Not at all, why?" I ask curious.

"Well, Sophie kicked her out of Will's boatshed, and she's too stubborn to try moving back in with you before your month is up," Cleo tells me.

"Well, she's welcome to apologize, and come back," I say.

"That's great! Do you think you can call and tell her that," Cleo asks hopefully.

"If she really wants to come back, then she should call, and apologize. She hurt me, not the other way around," I say.

"So, you won't try talking to her first, even if it meant bringing the peace," Cleo asks.

"I didn't deserve the way she treated me," I say calmly.

"Okay, okay, I get it," Cleo says.

We all relax as Rikki comes in with Lizzie and her kids. I find it funny that even though our twins were born only about two hours apart, they were born on two separate days, and in two different months. I'm still socked that she went into labor so soon.

****Bella's POV****

After Cleo left, I felt lost. Where can I go now? I could ask Rikki, but her twins are probably just as annoying. If only Will would stand up for me. I decide to go to the café, maybe I can think of something after relaxing for a while.

As I walk in, I see my best friends having fun without me. Well, this is just great. They are happier without me. So, I walk to a booth, and sit down feeling lonely.

Ash walks over to me, and says, "Why are you sitting alone? You know if you just apologize she's let you come back. Besides, you'll have to eventually anyway."

"What if I'm not sorry?"

"Then I guess you just need to suck it up and do it anyways," Ash responds.

I look up at him, and see that he's being sincere. "Okay."

He helps me up, and I walk over to the huge group in the corner.

"Emma, can we speak?"

She looks at me, and then the baby in her arms. Melanie reaches over,

and takes the baby from her arms, and Emma nods her head at me.

Emma gets up, and follows me out of earshot.

I turn around to face her, and take a deep breath.

"I'm sorry. I know that's not enough to make you forgive me, not after what I did, but please give me a chance. I know that we said a month apart or however long it took for my daughter to come, but I want to come back," I say.

Emma starts to shake her head. This is a bad thing, I just know it. Then I notice that she's smiling.

"Bella, as hurt as I was, I understand. I am tired and I was pregnant, too. I know that it's difficult to be tired when you get to the end there. You need your sleep for when your baby does come. Do I still feel hurt? Yes, but I've realized that I might have done the same thing."

"Really?"

"Well, I probably wouldn't have done it, but I would have considered it," Emma says.

"Guess that makes you a better person than me."

"Maybe. Either way, move back in. It's what's best," Emma says.

"Thanks, I'm going to go get my things from Will's boatshed. I'll meet you at home," I say before leaving.

****At the caf  ****

****Rikki's POV****

I'm so glad that Emma and Bella made up. After a while, everyone heads home. I stayed until it was time to close. I figured it would just be easier to go home together. So, I sit alone with the twins while he goes through the process of closing.

It was nice to see everyone. It felt rather lonely since I only see Zane and Lizzie comes around every once in a while to help when I need it.

"Ready to go, love?" Zane asks.

"Yes, let's go."

The twins were all set their stroller, so I get up, and we leave the caf  .

"So, I thought I'd take you out tomorrow, just you and me. Some time away from the kids. I know it's only been two weeks, but you haven't been without them, and I thought you could use a night away," Zane says as we start home.

"That actually sounds great, thanks," I say.

"Good, it's all set up with my dad."

"What if I didn't like the idea?"

"Looks like you lose then," Zane says smiling at me.

"Oh do i?"

We continue to joke and talk all the way home and before I know it, we are home, and bringing the twins up to bed. It's going to be a good night.

****The next day at Noon****

Zane and I took turns waking up with the twins like we always do, and before I know it, it's time for our night out. He decided that I needed more than two hours for dinner or a movie so his dad came over at noon.

"Are you ready?" Zane asks,

"Yes," I say then turn to his dad, "You can call us if you need us."

"I know, Rikki, I've had a kid before," Zane's dad laughs and smiles at me.

So, we head out the door.

"Now, I know that you'd rather go to Mako. So, do you want to swim or come with me?"

"If you don't mind, I want to swim," I say.

"Okay, I'll meet you at the moon pool," he says as we reach the place where his boat is moored.

"Alright," I say as I take a dive into the water.

The water feels amazing; it's been so long since I've been swimming. Well, it feels that way, anyways. I think I can take me time getting there since his boat goes much slower than my tail.

Twenty minutes later and I still end up beating Zane to the moon pool.

I pull myself onto the sand, and notice my still red tail. I guess I've been so focused on my kids that I didn't notice that it didn't change back. However, I did notice that James's tail was goldish orange like how mine used to be, but Maria's tail is red, like mine. I haven't had time to talk to Lewis about that, but maybe tomorrow.

Just as I start to dry myself off, Zane slides down the hole from above. Perfect timing.

"Hey, I didn't get to set it up yet, do you want to help?"

"Nah, you can do it."

"Gee, thanks."

He sets up the picnic by placing a blanket in the middle of the sand, and placing the door on top. Then he grabs my hand, and takes me to where I'm obviously supposed to sit.

"This looks great."

"I'm glad you like it. Go ahead and start eating," Zane says.

We start to eat, and everything is delicious. I can't believe he cooked all this.

"This is amazing. When did you do all this?"

"After my last turn this morning. I knew you'd like it," he says smiling.

"Well, I do thanks."

"So, I thought, now that the twins are here, we could talk about our wedding."

"Okay, what about it?"

"Well, how about a date?"

"We're on one, remember?"

"Haha, I meant for the wedding."

"Oh ummâ€¦ how about January fifth?"

"Why then?" he asks.

"Well, the twins will be seven months by then and we will still have about a month until school starts again," I say.

"Well, alright. That will work perfectly with the honey moon I have planned."

"You have our honey moon planned?" I ask incredulously.

"Well, yes and no. Dad knows that you've always wanted to go to Fiji, remember you told me about when you first became a mermaid and you wanted to swim to Fiji. Well, dad thought that you could finally get to do that. He's offering to send us there for a month," Zane says.

"Really? He's willing to send us to Fiji? That's amazing! But what about the twins?"

"He'll take care of them, and he talked to your parents about it as well. They are going to help with it, too," Zane says.

"Wow. That is awesome, truly. We will definitely have to thank them somehow." I say.

"Well, first let's plan our wedding."

"Alright, well, I don't want anything big," I say.

"Alright, maybe something small at the cafÃ©?"

"Yes, I think that'd be nice."

"And for sure January fifth?" he asks.

"Yes, that will be our day," I say.

"And then a month in Fiji," he says.

"A month apart from our twins. I don't know how I'm going to feel about that," I say.

"Probably relieved," he answers.

"After that long. Maybe."

"Anyways, back to the wedding."

"Oh right. Well, definitely the girls and Lizzie in the wedding party."

"So, then the guys and Nate? He is my best friend."

"Sounds perfect."

"Then we could have a DJ so Bella won't be as stressed as during Cleo's wedding," he says.

"Sounds good."

"And the food will be from the cafÃ© as well. Makes sense, right?"

"Right. Oh and my mom is a baker or was a baker in America. She could bake our cake," I say.

"Fantastic," he says.

"And the colors? Like for the dresses?"

"Hmmâ€¦ well your favorite is redâ€¦"

"But what about yours? Green, right?" I have to ask.

"Yah, but red and green will make it seem Christmas themed," he says.

"Maybe we will have to think about that," I say.

"Yes, we probably should think about that before deciding," he answers.

"So, what else?"

"Well, Nate will be my best man. Is Lizzie going to be your maid of honor?"

"Well, she should be, right? She is my sister, and we've gotten just as close, if not closer than I am with any of the girls," I say.

"Well, she should be, right? She is my sister, and we've gotten just as close, if not closer than I am with any of the girls," I say.

"I think so, but we have time for that, too," he says.

"You're right. Why don't we relax for the rest of our date?"

"Sounds like a plan. Let's go swimming," he says surprising me.

I kiss him for an answer, and then get up and jump in the pool. It only takes him two seconds to follow me in, and leisurely swim out of the underwater entrance.

So far, this has been a truly perfect date. We've planned our whole wedding, and even our honey moon. I can't believe we will be away from the twins for a whole month. Now, we are doing my favorite thing in the world, and the day isn't even half over yet. I've got the perfect fianc e.

A/N there you have it; I start school on Monday so look for one update a week. Hope that this chapter was enjoyable, let me know what you think and thanks for the reviews

Zikki 3: thank you, and did this chapter make things seems good for Emma and Bella?

Chinaluv: thanks again for always reviewing, and yay good guess, huh?

Magicmaker494: thank you so much, you really made me feel better about my timing* and I liked you're story too I reviewed each chapter under JenJen.**

28. false alarms and possible solutions

Chapter 27: False alarms and possible solutions

**At the McCartney's **

Cleo's POV

Lewis and I were enjoying our Friday night in, after a long week, when I feel the need to talk about my new job in about a month.

"Lewis, what am I going to do about the marine park?"

"I thought that we decided that it was just best that we did what they wanted?"

"Well, we did, but if there's a way out of it "

"But in reality there really isn't any other way."

"I have a feeling that there is, but I can't seem to figure it out,"

I say.

"You have a feeling?"

"Yah, like I'm missing somethingâ€|"

"But what would you be missing?"

"I don't know, but there's just something."

"Well, did you ever tell the girls?"

"Kid of, I explained that I was fine, not in any danger at least for now. They've been a little concerned about more pressing things," I say.

"Well, maybe you should talk to them," Lewis says.

"Like now?"

"Well, you could wait to tomorrow," Lewis suggests.

"Alright, tomorrow," I say.

****At Emma and Bella's apartment****

****Bella's POV****

All night I kept having these pains, and twice I went to the hospital because of it. They told me that it's called fake labor. I don't really care, I just want a break from this pain.

I haven't talked to Will since Sophie kicked me out. I don't know if he's mad at me or her. He might not even know, but he hasn't bothered to call. I try to get some more sleep, but it evades me. The next thing I know I can smell something delicious coming from the kitchen.

I make my way there, and I see Ash cooking a big breakfast. He has Lilly-Anne on his shoulder, and Rosemary sitting in the rocker contently. Emma is nowhere in sight, but I think that was planned.

"What's all this?" I ask.

"I just thought that because you and Emma had a long night at the hospital I would help you out, and make breakfast," Ash responds.

"Really? Aren't you tired from taking care of the twins?"

"Well, yah, but Emma's worked way harder than me, and she deserves a treat," Ash says.

"That's sweet, Ash."

His whole attitude changes. "By the way, what you did was wrong, and you're lucky that she's a forgiving person," he tells me.

"Well, you're lucky, too," I say back angrily. It's not as though he

has the room to talk.

"I know that, believe me. Now go wake Emma, breakfast is ready," Ash says going back to his happy self.

I make my way to Emma's room to wake her up, just as she walks out.

"Morning Bella, is that breakfast I smell?"

"It is, I was just coming to tell you," I say.

"Good," she says and then we head to the kitchen.

She takes Lilly-Anne and puts her in the second rocker we have, and then helps Ash bring the food to the table.

"Thanks Ash," Emma says.

"No problem, I thought you deserved a treat. Actually, I thought that since today's Saturday, you could go do something on your own without the girls," he says.

"Really?"

"Yah, I thought maybe you and Bella could call Rikki and Cleo, and go for a swim or something."

"Aww, that sounds great. Not that I don't love the girls, but I've been with them consistently since they were born. Are you sure?"

"Absolutely," Ash says with a smile.

"So, we are going for a swim," I ask Emma.

"Yes, after breakfast we will call them, and go," Emma says excitedly.

She finishes eating, and runs to her room to get ready.

"I think you just made her day," I say.

"Good, now it's your turn to make it a great day, and not ruin it," Ash says returning to the mean Ash he was earlier.

"Why?"

"Because you hurt her, and now you have to make it up to her," Ash says.

"Fine," I say, there was no way I was getting out of it anyways.

"By the way, Will called, he says he wants to talk to you, but I think you should wait until after your swim," Ash says.

"Why?"

"Because it'll upset Emma. She's excited because you will all be

hanging out together again," Ash says.

"Okay, I get it. If he calls again, tell him I'll talk to him after our swim to Mako," I say then I go get ready.

****At Rikki and Zane's place****

****Rikki's POV****

Zane and I had a great time out last night. We came back around midnight, and the twins were fast asleep, Zane's dad said they were angels, and the rest of the night they were.

I woke up in the morning, and decided to do something nice for Zane. As I start making breakfast, my phone rings.

It's Emma.

"Hey Em," I say as I answer it.

"Hey Rikki, guess what?"

"You know I'm not into guessing games."

"Okay then. Ash decided to do something nice for me."

"Okay, what did he decide to do?"

"He's taking the girls, so I can swim with you guys."

"With who?"

"You, Cleo and Bella."

"What if I can't come?"

"Why wouldn't you be able to come?" she asks, and you could practically hear the sadness in her voice.

"Well, I have kids, too. Zane took me out for a night last night, and I can't just expect him to do it today as well," I say.

"I'm sure that he'll understand," Emma replies.

"Maybe, I'll let you know," I say then hang up.

Zane comes down the stairs as the conversation ends, and I smile up at him.

"Good morning," I say.

"Good morning, who was that?"

"Emma."

"And?"

"She wants me to go for a swim with her and the girls," I say.

"So, go."

"Well, I just didn't want to take advantage of you. You know, after you were so good to me last night."

"Have fun with the girls and you can tell them about our plans for the wedding," Zane says.

"Thanks, you're the best."

****At the McCartney's****

****Cleo's POV****

I roll over to the sound of my phone going off. Lewis has been letting me sleep in later since he knows that I need it during my final month of my pregnancy. I open my eyes, and reach for my phone.

It's Emma.

"Hello?"

"Cleo! Were you sleeping?"

"Yes, Emma, I need my sleep," I say groggily.

"Well, get up. We are going for a swim."

"What if I don't want to?"

"Do it anyway, come on I haven't been for a swim for two weeks, I really need this."

"Alright, are we meeting at the beach and swimming together or meeting at Mako?"

"Let's meet at the beach," Emma says sounding like she has a smile on her face.

"Okay. Give me like a half hour. I'll be there."

"Byes!"

She hangs up and I set my phone back down, and begin to get ready. I quickly go and change. Brushing out my hair and my teeth before going downstairs.

"Looks like I'll be seeing the girls today without having to ask," I say to Lewis.

"What do you mean?"

"Emma just asked me to go for a swim with her and the girls," I say.

"That's great! Don't forget to talk to them about whatever you think is missing from your options for what's going on at the marine park and your job," Lewis says.

"I know that's why I needed to talk to them, remember?"

"Of course, have fun during your swim, I'll be here when you get back," Lewis says kissing me and then opening the door for me.

****At the beach****

****No POV****

Cleo sits next to Rikki in the sand, as they wait for Emma and Bella. Rikki looks at the water like she's just dying to run into the water. They are both quiet.

Then Emma and Bella come into view.

"Hey girls, you made it," Emma says with a smile.

"Yes, we are here, can we go swimming now?" Rikki says hurriedly.

"Yes," Emma replies.

The girls get up from the sand, and all run into the water. They don't speed swim to Mako like they usually do. They took their time. Gliding over the reefs, and going with the dolphins.

They were going so slow it felt like time was frozen for them, but their enjoyment for the moment was so great, it didn't matter. Eventually, though they did speed up, and go to Mako Island.

They reached the entrance to the moon pool, and Bella and Cleo went first. Cleo placed herself on the step in the moon pool. Bella managed to sit next to her, and when Emma and Rikki came in they reached up and held on to the sides of the moon pool.

"That was nice," Emma says.

"I know. It was awesome," Rikki says with a smile.

"Yes, so anyways, how is everyone," Bella says looking bored.

"Good, but I did want to ask Cleo to ask Lewis why James's tail is gold, but Maria's tail is red like mine," Rikki says.

"I'll ask him, but that might be better suited for someone who knows the mermaid world better," Cleo says.

"You think?" Rikki asks.

"Well, yah, after all Lewis only knows so much and now that we have more expert opinions, we should ask them," Cleo says.

"She's right, you know. We know people that have a lot more knowledge than we do about these things," Emma says.

"You're right, I'll talk to one of them," Rikki says.

"Anyways, there is something I wanted to talk to you all about," Cleo says.

"What is it?" Bella asks with concern on her face.

"Well, I'm going to have to be a part of the dolphin shows as a mermaid at least for a few of them, and take pictures and do autographs. I'm trying to find a way out of it," Cleo says.

"Well, just say no," Bella says as if it's the most obvious and easiest solution in the world.

"I tried. The owner will expose me if I do. The thing is, no one will know that I'm realâ€¦" Cleo says.

"Okay, so you can't say no, but there's got to be a way," Bella says.

"That's what I told Lewis, but honestly I can't think of anything. I just feel like I'm missing something. I just can't figure it out," Cleo says.

"Well, she threatened you, you could always go to the police," Emma says.

"And tell them what exactly? That some woman is threatening my mermaid secret?" Cleo asks.

"It's not ideal, but we did have the problems before, and the police already know us, they could help us out of this," Bella says.

"Yah, but that was when we were kidnapped, not threatened. Unless she gets attacked they won't do anything," Emma says.

"So, Cleo has to get hurt in order to get help from the police?" Bella asks.

"Well, yes. And honestly her threat isn't even going to hurt her physically. She isn't really in any danger per say," Emma says.

"Okay well then that's out," Cleo says.

"There has to be something," Bella says.

"What about me?" Rikki says.

"What do you mean?" Bella asks.

"I could wipe their memories," Rikki says.

"That's what I was missing. It was you," Cleo says happily.

"So, you want me to?" Rikki asks.

"Yes, but you realize that Lori will no longer know, and he was the one you wanted to tell in the first place," Rikki says.

"You can't just let Lori keep his memory and have her lose it," Cleo says.

"It won't work that way, he won't understand why she doesn't know, and we really can't let anyone know that I have those kinds of powers," Rikki says.

"I could always retell him," Cleo says.

"It'll probably just end up the same way and it'll just be the same situation," Bella says.

Cleo sighs. "Is it so bad that I'm not so against doing it?"

"No, it won't actually hurt us," Emma says rationally.

"And like you said, no one will know," Rikki says.

"If it turns bad, we could always rely on Rikki's power," Cleo says.

"So, only if it turns bad?" Rikki asks.

"Yes, only if it turns bad," Cleo says.

"Good, now that's settled, I have to go," Bella says.

She bids them all goodbye and the last thing they see of her is a flash of green.

The girls continue to chat, and go for a slow swim over the area around Mako. The area seemed so peaceful, and then Cleo had to leave so Rikki and Emma decided to race home.

Emma won as always, and the girls headed to the caf   to enjoy some time off before going back to their babies and boyfriends.

****At the caf  ****

****Bella's POV****

I finally got a hold of Will, and asked him to come to the caf   to talk to me. He told me that he would meet me.

I see Rikki and Emma walk in. Great, where is he? I don't want them to come sit with me or hear this conversation between Will and I. I really need to figure things out with him without anyone overhearing.

Suddenly, Will comes in, and sits across from me.

"Hi," he says.

"Hi, I haven't heard from you," I tell him.

"I know. Sorry, my phone's been acting up, and I couldn't fix it,"

>he says.<p>

"That's a lie and you know it. Even while I was living with you, you were attempting to avoid me. You barely spent any time with me, and then you let your sister kick me out of your house, and didn't bother to call and see if I was okay," I say angrily.

"Bella, I didn't mean to avoid you, I just couldn't stand being around you."

"Why? What did I do?"

"Let's start with that hateful engagement. It wasn't about us it was about you and Rikki. You were upset that you felt the same way she did and she gave good reasons, but then she turned around and got engaged. That's up to her. Her mind changed, but yours didn't. I know you didn't really want to start planning our wedding or even be in any sort of promise to marry me. You did it out of hatred of what Rikki did. To show her up," Will says.

I have nothing to say to that. It's the truth.

"It wasn't completely bad. I do care about you, and with the baby, I figure we will end up together anyways."

"Isn't that why you didn't like me proposing in the first place. Because you feel like you were being forced into something that you don't want. If you don't want it. Don't lead me on," Will says.

"Alright. I know I was wrong. But we talked about this. Why avoid me?"

"Because I can't stand to see you right now," Will says.

"But you let me stay with you after the fight with Emma," I say.

"It wouldn't be right to let the mother of my child be homeless."

"Yet, you let Sophie kick me out, and not even call me to check up on me. You didn't bother to find me all night," I say.

"I told Sophie to kick you out so that you would make u with Emma before the baby decides to come out and forces the two of you back together," Will says.

"What?!"

"I had to, and now you are all back together, and our daughter won't be in a place with anger brewing," Will says.

"But you did this, and you didn't even care. I've been fake labor pains, and you don't care," I yell at him, and then make my way to Emma and Rikki. They watch me and Rikki quickly gets up, and grabs me looking at my pants, which are wet. Great the perfect time for my water to break.

A/N hey guys, I plan every Wednesday until the end of the semester, I'm sorry this one was late, but I left my notebook at home, and couldn't, so sorry.

Thank you to my wonderful reviewers: chinaluv, zikki 3, magicmaker, and mermaidsarereal.

Please review and sorry for any mistakes whether it be spelling or grammar or repeating lines.

**By the way, this story is far from over, but does anyone want me to

do the Five Years Later story when Denman and Charlotte get out.**

29. Oh the Problems

Chapter 28: Oh the Problems

At the hospital

Bella's POV

The doctor told me that I got here just in time. They anticipate a fast delivery. I'm so mad at Will that I told him he can't be in the room, and I'm not sure I want him even standing outside the room. Is that too harsh? Oh well, I'd prefer that he wasn't near me right now. I'm seething.

Rikki says I should let Will in, so during labor, I can scream at him, and he won't yell back. I just don't want him to be in my sight.

Suddenly, the doctor is yelling, "It's time."

"Push!"

I start pushing as hard as I can, wow this really hurts. I'm screaming out in pain because it hurts that much. Rikki tries to calm me, but it doesn't work. She can't seem to get my mind off the pain. It's just so hard to concentrate on anything else, plus the doctor's yelling, "Push!" and other things at me to push it along.

I'm still screaming, and finally the doctor says, "One more."

I muster all my strength, and see my daughter enter the world they clean her off, and hand her to me green tail and all.

I smile down at her. I've been dried off from my water breaking so she's the only mermaid in form in the room. The doctor leaves to let Emma and Will in the room.

"She's beautiful," Emma says.

"She is," Will agrees. "But we need to talk about what just happened before you went into labor."

"We will give you some space. If you need us, you know our numbers," Rikki says. She walks to the door with Emma and stops.
"Congratulations."

The room goes silent for a few minutes. Finally, I've had enough.

"Talk, Will."

"I don't want to fight anymore, Bella. You really hurt me, and I really hurt you," he starts.

"Yes, you did," I say.

"Just listen."

"Fine, say whatever you want to say."

"I think that our relationship needs to take a break. All we have been focusing on is ourselves, and our relationship. We've been relatively fighting for I think two months. Even before you're proposal and the big fight, our problems have been going on from the beginning of your pregnancy. I blamed myself, I never should have proposed to you because of the baby, but it's not just me, is it?"

When he finished with "is it?" I realized that he was right. For some reason, I was the problem, maybe not totally, but I do believe that it is my fault.

"Maybe you are right. It's not just your fault, but it's not totally mine either," I say.

"But you agree, don't you?"

"Agree to what?"

"Agree that our relationship needs a break. We will just be two friends taking care of our baby," Will says.

I look up into his eyes, and see that he's being serious. He truly believes it's for the best, and after what's happened, I think that I agree with him, it's for the best, and after what's happened, I think that I agree with him, it's time to focus on the baby.

"Yah, let's take a break. We need to be here for our daughter," I say.

"Good, now why don't we name our baby," Will says with a slight smile.

"Honestly, I don't know what to name her," I say.

"Well, no boy names since she's a girl."

"Funny Will, real funny."

"What about Sophie?"

"I refuse to name our daughter after a woman who hates me."

"It was a joke, Bella," Will says.

"Well, this isn't a joking matter," I say.

"Sorry, I'm just trying to make things a little better," Will says.

"Well, it's not helping. Come up with name for her."

"You don't want to name her?"

"Honestly, I think you should do the honors, but for now, maybe she should take my last name. If and when we get married, we will change

her last name as well, sound good?"

"I can live with that, after all, we did just sort of break up."

"Good, so what are you thinking for a name?"

"Well, I like the names Ashley or Jessica," Will says.

"I think that Ashley is a better name," I say. "I really like the name Ashley."

"Ashley it is, but what about a middle name?"

"Does she really need one? I don't have one," I say.

"It's always nice to have one," Will says.

"Alright, well, um does Lynn sound good?"

"Ashley Lynn Hartley, I like it," Will says.

"Ashley Lynn Hartley sounds perfect," I say.

"Alright, so I should go get the nurse who is going to do the birth certificate for our little Ashley," Will says.

"Yes, but the way, what's today's date?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Well, we have to remember her birthday," I say.

"July 16th 2011. Happy now?"

"Yes, now go get the nurse," I say.

Ten minutes later, Will comes in with the nurse, who takes Ashley, weighs her, takes her measurements, and finger prints. Then she asks us for her name, and to sign the birth certificate.

Everything went well. The doctor came, and had to check Ashley to make sure that she was okay. Since she was two weeks early, they had to check everything to make sure that she would be okay.

About two hours later, the nurse comes back in, and says that there were no problems with Ashley. The doctor then came in, and said that I'm actually okay to go home with Ashley.

Will helps me gather everything we need, and helps me sign out of the hospital.

Since neither Will nor I have a car. We walk to the apartment, which is only a few blocks away, thank goodness for that. It takes quite a bit longer than I planned, but we get there about 45 minutes later, and I open the door.

No one was in the living room or kitchen, and since Ashley is asleep I decide to take her to the nursery where she'll be staying with Rosemary and Lilly-Anne. As I approach the room, I hear Emma singing

softly to her daughters. I don't want to interrupt so I wait until she's finished, and then open the door.

"That was nice. I didn't know that you sang," I say.

"I do, I've been singing to them every night. I know it's only like four o'clock, but they needed a nap, and I felt like it," she answers.

"Okay, well, Ashley and I are home from the hospital and I thought I'd lay her down."

"That's fine, I'll get out of your way," Emma says.

I lay down, and think, 'time to learn about motherhood.'

****At the McCartney's****

****Cleo's POV****

After our swim, I went home. I needed to tell Lewis what the girls had to say about my predicament. He was just sitting on our couch, working on some homework, when I walked in.

"Hey honey," he says.

"Hey," I say as I waddle my way to the couch.

He closes the book he was looking at, and faces me. "How was the swim?"

"Good. It was nice, Emma and Rikki haven't had time to really enjoy themselves lately," I say.

"Well, that's nice. Did you talk to them about the marine park?"

"Yah, we came up with a few options, but the only possible one that really works is to just go with it," I say.

"OH did you find out what you were missing yesterday?"

"Yah, Rikki. She has the power to wipe minds, and that's what I couldn't put my finger on."

"So, why did you ax that idea?"

"Well, I still want Lori to know. There was a reason I wanted to tell him. He just found out on accident first."

"So why don't you just wipe the owner's memory?"

"We thought about that, too, but how do we explain to Lori why he can remember, and she can't?"

"You don't. Let him wonder," he says.

"No we can't do that, and the girls and I agree that it's best that no one knows about the mind wiping thing."

"Alright, I can see that. How about wiping both? I know that you want Lori to know but maybe he's not meant to know," Lewis says.

"You think?"

"Yah, I do."

"So, I should ask Rikki to do it?"

"Yes, you can go talk to her now."

"Deal. Off I go," I say then kiss him and make my way out the door.

****At Emma and Bella's apartment****

****2:30 am****

****Emma's POV****

I can hear a baby crying through the monitor, but according to the monitor it's Ashley, so I just try to get more sleep. Ten minutes later I realize that Bella was once again ignoring her child. The mother in me, feels bad for Ashley, the tired me feels like screaming at Bella, but the mother part is stronger. So instead of going into Bella's room and screaming at her, I go to the nursery and pick her up. I can tell that she needs a new diaper so I change her and rock her back to sleep.

After I place her in her crib, I checked to make sure that my babies were still okay before making my way back to my room. I get to my door, and look at Bella's door. I need to fix this. I go into her room.

"Bella, wake up," I say forcibly.

"What? What is it?" she asks sleepily.

"You ignored your baby's cries," I say.

"I thought it was your babies," she says.

"No, the baby monitor is set up to tell us which one is crying. So, if you looked at it, it would tell you that it was your baby," I say.

"Whatever, Emma, I'm trying to sleep," Bella says before putting in her ear plugs, and rolling over.

Obviously she doesn't care, and I need to get some sleep since she's made it clear that she won't be getting up the next time the girls cry.

Three and a half hours later there's more crying and I don't even think about ignoring it in hopes that Bella will get up.

Since it's six, I decide it's time to keep them up awhile for a little while. I go into the nursery, and see that Rosemary is awake, but not crying so I turn to Lilly-Anne, who is. I pick her up, and change her, then give her her bottle even though I also breastfeed, I

take turns with the bottle.

Once she's taken care of, I take her to the living room, and place her in the rocker. I then go get Rosemary, change her diaper, and put her in the other rocker. Having twins, and then a third child added to the mix made us need to buy extra stuff. I decide to make myself breakfast, and halfway through it, Ashley begins to cry. I go to Bella's room in hopes that she will get up, but she doesn't look like she's going to be moving soon.

So, I walk to the nursery, and take care of Ashley, doing all the same things I did for the other two for a third time, it's almost like I have triplets. We don't have three rockers though, so I place her in our swing instead. I then return to my breakfast.

The time passes and before I know it, it's ten o'clock, and Ash's time to come help with the girls. Ash used his key to come in since I could be busy with the girls, and he doesn't want me to worry about the door if it's him. Bella's still asleep, which makes me very mad. I'm so mad it's not even mad anymore it's seething.

"Good morning," Ash says to diverting my attention.

"Morning," I respond.

"Is it not good? Did the girls have trouble sleeping? You could have called me," Ash says offering his support.

"No, it wasn't the girls that made it a rough night. Well, sort of. Bella hasn't gotten up once all night, and she even has ear plugs so she could ignore it better."

"Well, that isn't fair, you need to talk to her," Ash responds as if I hadn't considered that.

"I did, I don't know what else to do," I say.

"Why don't you try talking to Will, he is just as responsible," Ash suggests.

"That's a good idea; I'll give him a call. Watch the girls for a few minutes?"

"Of course."

I walk into my room, and dial Will's number.

"Hello?"

"Hey Will, it's Emma."

"I know, it says so on my phone."

"Right, well, I wanted to talk to you about how neither you nor Bella have been taking care of your daughter."

"Well, it's Bella's job."

"It's both of your jobs and it doesn't matter if you're taking turns or whatever, if Bella wants to sleep, you need to be here. I have two

babies of my own to take care of," I say.

"Well, I'd love to come, but I'm busy right now," Will replies.

"Busy doing what?" I ask angrily.

"I have a job, that's where I've been hiding. I have to go, good luck," he says before clicking off.

Well that didn't work.

****Cleo's POV****

I went straight to Rikki's place to talk to her about wiping their memories. I really wanted to have just Lori know, but maybe Lewis is right. It's best that neither of them know.

So, I hoped that Rikki goes with me on this. It didn't take long to get there, and I was relieved when I did.

I had to knock three times, and wait several minutes.

Finally, Zane answered the door.

"Hey Cleo, what are you doing here?"

"I came to talk to Rikki, is she here?"

"You mean you didn't hear?"

"Didn't hear what?"

"Bella went into labor. Rikki should be home soon though, Bella's labor was quick," Zane answers.

"Wow, I had no idea."

"Well, come on in, and sit down. You probably need some rest," he says.

I go, and sit on the couch, and begin playing with their twins. They were so cute, and Zane was great with them, which surprises me. I hope that Lewis will be just like him.

I had to wait about forty minutes which didn't bother me at all, before Rikki came home.

Rikki seemed tired, but smiled at Zane and told him to rest before seeing why I was here.

"Sorry to bother you but Lewis thinks it's a better idea to wipe both minds."

"Is that what you want?"

"Yes," I say nodding.

"Then I'll do it," she says before closing her eyes, and focusing on her mind wiping power.

"It's done. They won't remember a thing so be careful."

****At the soon to be Bennett's****

****Rikki's POV****

Zane was really cool about keeping the twins all for me, but when I got home, he was happy that he could take a break! He really seemed exhausted so I let him take a nap.

Somehow, I thought taking the twins in their car seats down to the pool so that I could swim while they sleep, was a good idea. An hour later, I found out it wasn't. they started to cry while I was underwater, and since I don't have to breathe very often, they must've had to wait longer than they liked to wait.

Once u realized what the noise was, I got out immediately, and dried off, both of them were crying so I had no idea which one to pick up. So, I attempted both. It didn't work, so I put them back, and lifted the car seats to talk them to their room.

It seemed to take forever with their incessant crying, but I made it. The first thing I did was get them both out of their car seats. I put James in the rocker, which seemed to call him, so I then focused on Maria. Rocking her didn't seem to help, so then I thought, maybe she's hungry. She wasn't. she's too young to teeth, and so I was left with trying to play with her.

After ten minutes, Zane must've woken up to help.

"Obviously that isn't working," he says.

"Well, I don't know what else to do," I say.

"Playing with her isn't working, what else did you do?"

"Rocked her, and tried to feed her," I say.

"Well, obviously you're missing something very important," he says.

"Which is?"

"Change her diaper," he says simply.

"Wow, I'm an idiot," I say as I take her to the changing table.

"Not at all, her crying probably distracted you from thinking clearly.

"Yah, well it didn't stop you."

"It's okay, it does happen," he says as I finish changing her.

"I guess you're right. I should just be better at this mom stuff since you are the one gone most of the time, not me," I say.

"Don't worry about it, okay?"

"Shouldn't I worry about it?"

"No, off days happen. Now let's change James and go play with them down stairs," he says with a smile.

I agree, and as he does it, I realize that this does and should take time.

****A/N** thanks for reading, sorry it's like almost midnight on Wednesday, so it's almost like I didn't update on Wednesday. Speaking of I feel the need to note that my Wed is probably Thurs to most of you (if you live elsewhere other than in the USA) so I apologise if I got anyone's hopes up because of date confusions. So for reference I shall update around the same time every week. Also if there are any mistakes I'm sorry I kinda rushed my typing today. And sorry for the long author's note**** please review**

****Thank you** for reading, please review. And I will shout out to those who have.**

****Chinaluv:** thank you for always reviewing.**

****Swimngym:** no problem, I love new ideas and sorry it took a while to incorporate it, feel free to add more insight, and thanks for reviewing.**

****Zikki 3:** Will and Bella have some tough times ahead, and I agree he's gotten mean. Thank you for reviewing.**

****Tabih2o:** thank you for finding my story and liking it so much to review and read it all the way to the most recent chapter, I'm happy it was good enough that you didn't get bored, I hope my next chapters are just as good. I try not to kill anyone there are more interesting ways of getting rid of them. Thank you for pointing out that I neglect Cleo sometimes, I tend to focus on my favorite (Rikki) but I'll try to make things more even. **

****H2O rikki:** thank you also for finding my story, reviewing and loving it so much you spent a whole day reading it, I'm really glad that it was that good. And I am glad that things fit easily together, and it makes sense. **

30. Uhhhh

Chapter 29: Uhhhâ€|

****A week later-** Sunday, July 24****th****, 2011**

****At** Emma and Bella's apartment**

****Bella's POV****

It's six o'clock, and like every other day this week, I try to ignore Emma as she tries to wake me up. It's not that I don't want to take care of Ashley or even Emma's girls, it's that I want to do this my way. If Ashley and I want to sleep in than we can, but Emma wakes her up and says that we should keep them up because it's good for them or something. I love my daughter, and appreciate Emma getting up for in the middle of the night because I have trouble sleeping if I get up

in the middle of the night. There has to be a way to get her to see my point of view. Twenty minutes later, she wins and I fail.

I glare at her as I walk into the kitchen and gave a banana.

"Put that down and go get your daughter," Emma says forcefully.

She isn't crying, so I figure that she can wait a few minutes, so I say to Emma, "Why, she's not crying?"

"That's because I gave her a diaper change, which I shouldn't have to do, but now she needs fed. Anyways, you should always go to her first. Just because she's not crying doesn't mean she doesn't need you," Emma says like she's the mother of the year.

I don't feel like arguing with her at six in the morning, so I just say, "Yah, whatever." Then I continue with my banana since I'll be done in a minute anyway.

Emma continues to play with her girls, and is seemingly ignoring me. Suddenly, Ashley's cries break through the silence. Because I'm almost finished, I wait until I am done, but before I finish Emma, who was ignoring me and my baby, gets up, throws me an ugly look and goes to get Ashley.

"I was going to get her," I yell.

"When? The next time there's a blue moon?"

"I'm serious, I was almost finished, I was going to get her."

"Yah right, just like you get her when she cries in the middle of the night," Emma says angrily.

"We talked about that, and you know it," I say.

"We didn't talk, you plainly told me that you have issues falling back to sleep, which I think is a lie, and that you never intend to get up to take care of your daughter."

"I do take care of her, and I thought we were living together to help each other out, remember? And it's not a lie," I say getting angry.

"We are, but when have you helped me, I've basically been like a mom to triplets."

"That's not true! You just beat me to it. And just so you know, I would help you, you just don't give me the chance," I say.

"Yah, right. Here's your daughter, go take care of her," Emma says handing me Ashley.

Since Emma told me that she changed her diaper earlier, and that she would soon be hungry, I grab her bottle, and sit in the chair that we keep for feeding at night, and begin feeding her. I considered breast feeding, but Emma says that if she's the one waking up for Ashley in the middle of the night to feed her, then it was pointless for me to learn. I don't agree with that, but the idea of breastfeeding scares me.

I think that she's just full of herself. She chooses to take care of Ashley, that's not my fault. She's just being overly nice, and I'm just taking advantage of her niceness. After I finish feeding Ashley, I take her into the living room to put her in the rocker, and find it empty.

I place her in the rocker as planned, and then decide to look around for Emma. five minutes of searching later, I found a note from Emma.

**Bella,**

** I have decided to take my girls out for the day so that you may learn how to take care of the baby you brought home a week ago. I don't think that this will last long if you don't learn to take care of your daughter. I'll be home for dinner at seven. If you need anything, call Will. He's supposed to be helping you, not me.**

**-Emma**

What is wrong with her? Why can't she help me like she promised? And learn to take care of my daughter? I do take care of her. Very good care of her, just not at night, but I thought we understood why that was. Fine I'll just call Will, he should be here anyways, even if he does have a job, I'm sure his boss can give him a break, right?

So, I pick up my phone, and though it's only seven, I know that he's be up.

"Yes?"

"You should be here, Will," I say.

"I'm sorry Bella, maybe later."

"Later? No Will, you need to help me. I know you have a job now, but you still need to be here. And just to clarify, I'm pretty sure you are not sorry, and most likely won't be here later. You always say that, and regardless of your job and school, you've been missing more than that. Where have you been?"

"I really am sorry. Work is a bit more than I thought. And it does take up all my time, I am there now. I will be there later. I promise. Bye Bella,"

He hangs up and I'm left alone with just Ashley who I have to take care of. I can't believe that have all that time planning, and stuff, they both just abandoned me. Oh, I'm so going to let them have it later.

About ten o'clock

Cleo's POV

Ever since Rikki essentially reset Lori and the Owner's minds, things around the marine park have been a lot better. It's like nothing ever happened. No one knows anything. Which is like back to normal.

As I head to check in, I am suddenly tapped on my shoulder by Lori.

"Cleo, I need to speak with you," he says.

"I haven't logged in yet," I say.

"I'll log you in, just follow me," he says.

"I worriedly follow him, all the way to his office, he opens the door for me, and gestures for me to go in first. So, I do. I enter and immediately see the owner standing in the room. Uh oh.

She gestures for me to sit in the chair, and I do. It's not like I really have a choice. I wait for one of them to tell me what I'm doing here, calmly.

"We'd like you to watch something before we discuss it," Miss Young, the owner says.

"Okay," I say quietly.

She starts the video, which I can recognize right away as a security tape, oh this can't be good. I wonder if this is how Lewis felt when he got in trouble for Emma and Rikki letting Ronnie out.

Back to what's actually happening to me.

I realize that it's a security tape of me screaming, and jumping into the pool that Ronnie was in. it showed me changing into a mermaid, and Lori running out to find out what was wrong. It didn't end there, after he caught me, we dried off, and went into his office. The deed then switched to me explaining in detail about everything to Lori. Then asking if he could keep it to himself. I thought it would end there but it didn't. it switched to the meeting I thought would be just me and Lori, but the owner was there, too. It showed the entire conversation, which included them explaining that I don't get a choice I am their mermaid, and will be performing in dolphin shows, and doing autographs, and everything else. it then showed all the advertisements they had planned, and even though they haven't posted them, they still have them.

And then it stopped.

"So, tell me something, Cleo, why can't either of us remember any of that? We were there, but none of it rings a bell," Miss Young asks,

"I don't know, amnesia?" I suggest, oh great I sound like Rikki.

"Cut the crap, seriously just tell us what you did to make us forget."

"I didn't do anything, believe me," I say sincerely because I honestly didn't.

Ten minutes of tense silence later, where both are staring at me trying to determine if I am telling the truth, Lori says, "I believe she's telling the truth."

"Fine, but someone she knows did it. Like they have someone who has a power like that. Who is it? You need to tell us," Miss Young says.

"I don't know, and it doesn't matter, you've only been mind wiped for a week," I say.

"Tell us, or I'll tell the world your secret, and that mermaids have the power to control our minds."

"But that's a lie, and you know it," I say suddenly afraid.

"Not totally, some mermaid wiped our minds, which is essentially the same as controlling our minds. So, are you going to tell us."

I think for a second. I could be honest in a way by saying it's the queen, but not saying that it's Rikki.

"It's the queen, I don't know her name, but she has the power to do it so that we can protect ourselves. Our secret. She's worried about the world, and what could happen," I say.

"You just call her the queen?"

"Yes, she lives in an underwater world unless we need her. Please, please don't tell anyone," I say.

"Fine, but you are going to be our mermaid in our show."

"I don't get a choice, do i?"

"Not after what you did to us," Miss Young says.

"It wasn't me, though. It was the queen, I swear," I say.

"It doesn't matter. We already made all the advertisements, and stuff, so it will be you," Miss Young says.

"Alright, I get it. I'll do it after the baby is born," I say.

She just smiles and leaves.

"You can start work now," Lori says.

"Right," I say and leave to begin work.

****At about two o'clock****

****Emma's POV****

I'm more than fed up with Bella after a week of her letting me take care of Ashley. I don't remember this nonsense about me being the only person that's supposed to get up in the middle of the night, and where is Will? At least Ash proved himself to me. He's been there for me so much. He even told me that I should talk to Bella and if I need to, I can stay at his apartment, and he'll stay at mine with the girls.

He really had come through. Something everyone thought might not

happen, especially me.

After I left with the girls, I just took them to random places. I was surprised that I could actually spend four hours just wandering around, showing the girls places. At ten o'clock, Ash calls me, right on time, and tells me that he'll take the girls for a while.

I asked if he was sure that he didn't want me to stay with him to help, but he said to take some time off, so I went swimming. I actually ran into Melanie, who said that Nate was spending time with his son. We swam around together before going into the moon pool.

"So, how do you tell Nathan that he has to hide what he is?" I ask.

"Oh it's simple, I yell at him or explain to him that it's wrong to touch water, and let other people see. It takes time, but he seemed to get it after a short time," Melanie says.

"When did you start teaching him?"

"When he started walking, and getting into stuff," she says.

"Do you know why he has a gold tail instead of black like yours was? Rikki mentioned it last week, and I was wondering if you knew," I say.

"Yes, I know. His tail stays gold because all mermen need to be easily identifiable to everyone. Mermen have their own world, they're own kind. Our world and theirs are very separated, we don't really interact. It's hard to explain, but I could tell Rikki about this. She needs to know," Melanie says.

"Well, she should be at home, why don't you go there?"

"That's great, I'll see you later, okay?"

"Okay," I say and she takes off underwater, while I just decided to float in the water.

****No POV****

Will and Sophie were on a boat by Mako. Sophie decided that since Will was unwilling to keep diving for money, and going for titles, he would train her to do it. His new job was to teach her and train her. Until she was good enough, she had gotten him a really good job as an assistant in a dentist's office.

So, Will set up the line, and helped her learn to breathe, and tell her that she should do short dives. Sophie gets in the water, and dives down to the ten meter marker.

She looks around, and sees quite clearly something big and white. At a closer look, she realizes that it's a long tail with the other half of the body is human. She's looking at a mermaid, slowly swimming towards the main land. Sophie is shocked, and surprised so much that she actually swam after the mermaid for awhile before realizing that she needed air, and the mermaid is obviously faster than she is.

Sophie then decides that she's going to capture this mermaid, but there's no way that she could go up to the surface screaming that there's a mermaid in the water. So, she decides to keep it to herself until she captures the mermaid.

Now all she has to do is think of a plan.

****At the soon-to-be-Bennetts****

****Rikki's POV****

Zane was at work, so I was taking care of the twins until he gets home. I decided that they needed a bath today. I fill the tub, and place them in it, once they change they can swim around, and be a lot different than normal babies.

So, I add some soap, and wash them carefully with gloves on my hands. However, it didn't work as well as I had hoped. Before I knew it, I was soaked, and laying on my back and covered in soap. The twins had decided to be fussy, and splash water everywhere. Maybe I should have had Zane do this instead of me, or I could very well have waited for his help in case something like this happens. Either way, it's too late now.

I dry myself off, and finish everything I need to do to finish their baths. After that, I took them to their room, and change their clothes and diapers, when I heard the doorbell.

I grab them both, and walk down the stairs. I lay Maria in the swing, and carry James with me to the door.

I swing the door open, and I'm surprised to see that it's Melanie.

"Um hi," I say.

"Hi, I came here to talk to you about the reason James has a gold tail, and not a red one," Melanie says.

"Oh alright, well come in, and sit," I say.

I lead her to the living room, and lay James down in the play pen.

"So, tell me, why is he different?" I ask.

"Well, you are the queen of the mermaid world, and there is a king of the merman world. Mermen always have gold tails so that they could be pretty much be distinguishable from a distance. I just came to tell you that it's because of the things with the merman world," Melanie says.

"Wow, okay. Well why is two different worlds?"

"Mermen, after a while of living underwater, become permanent. I think that after maybe a year of two of being there. They can change back into humans. It's important that you make sure that James know that when he's older. I guess merman have some special need to be in their world," Melanie says.

"Wow, that's just wow. But you didn't explain why the world's are separated?"

"Honestly, I'm not sure why, but the king, and queen do communicate so solve issues, and he has stronger powers. So, if something happens, he is the one for all," she says.

"How would I call him? I mean, I never even met him. I only just found out," I say.

"No worries, I'll send word for people to tell the king that he is needed. Leave it to me," Melanie says with a smile.

"Thanks that really means a lot," I say.

"No problem, but I should go. Sorry for rushing in and blurting all this out, and then rushing out, but I have to go," Melanie says in a sorry type of voice.

"It's alright. Thanks for the information, and I really appreciate the fact that you came here to tell me," I say.

She leaves after that, and then I just choose to relax until Zane gets home.

****At Emma and Bella's apartment****

****At 7 o'clock****

****Bella's POV****

All day. I got angrier and angrier at Emma, and Will, and Ash. The four of us were supposed to work as a team, but no help has come from them. I haven't heard a word from Emma since she left me that note this morning. After the short talk with Will, he became unreachable, and Ash claimed that he was busy with the two he has, so where's Emma then? I'm so ticked off that I swear I'm going to explode the second they walk through the door.

The clock chimes seven just as the door opens and Emma, Ash, their twins, and Will come in.

Will speaks first. "I'm sorry that I haven't been around, but my job has been running me ragged. I thought that you knew about it because you stayed with me for those two weeks. That's why I wasn't home a lot, but I promise to get more time off so that I can take care of Ashley."

"Fine, but you need to make up for it as soon as possible, I'm not happy with you, but I'm more unhappy with Emma," I say.

He nods and goes to the babies' room with Ash, who takes his twins with him.

Emma didn't miss a thing of our conversation.

"So you are unhappy with me?"

"Yes, you left me a crappy note about taking your twins out and that

Will should e helping me not you, and then I call Ash, and he has your twins, but you weren't there. So, where ave you been, andwhy did you get a day off?"

"He gave me a few hours to relax. I've been taking care of three babies, what have you been doing, huh?"

"I've been taking care of them, too," I say.

"That's a lie. You have yet to get up in the middle of the night. You put in ear plugs so that you won't hear them, and even when I've been busy with my girls, you thought that I should get up and take care of yours, too, since you were eating or something. I think that today has been the only day, that you've really had to take care of her," Emma says.

"That's not true!"

"Yes, it is, and you know it."

"I take care of her," I say.

"Oh really? Well, fine then you can be the one to get up in the middle of the night to prove it," Emma syas.

"I never know it's my baby, and we've talked about this," I say.

"You could do it to help me, too, and I don't care what you say about sleep problems."

"That's not fair," I say.

"Fine then get up and check, I don't mind."

"But that's a waste of getting up in the middle of the night."

"I'm just saying that it isn't fair for me to have to be the one getting up all the time," Emma says.

"Then I guess that I'll have to try to get up," I say.

"Good because we need to get along," Emma says.

A/N wow, well over 3000 words, and none of it the author's note? This was a long one. Thanks for all the reviews keep it up** it inspires me**

Chinaluv: thanks as always, I'm glad it made you happy, and sad that you were sad.

Guest: I tried to fix the problems with the Bella/ Will uncaring situation, is it better now? And thanks, give me a name next time.

Other guest: I am writing more chapters, and thanks for reviewing

Another guest from ch 14: your review confused me, but thank you for reviewing.

****Another guest ch 10: thanks for the input, sorry I already had decided by the time I got the review.****

****TaBIH2o: thanks for reviewing previous chapters as well as this past one, Melanie will come in again soon, I didn't want her in too much if no one liked her.****

****H2oTaBI: thank you for reviewing a previous chapter, and I am and will try to include Cleo/ Bella more, I promise.****

****Zikki 3: thanks for reviewing, and I agree to your entire review, but hopefully Bella gets better, right?***

****H2o Rikki: I hope this email for the chapter is more recognizable this time, thanks again for the review**** and no problem, I like updating then I get more reviews****

****Swimminggym: stick around, Bella and Will have time to fix things after all they have a kid, and have to spend time together, thanks for the review****

****If I missed anyone, I am sorry, let me know and I'll give you a shout next time. Thanks for everything, until next week, see yah****

31. Simple Solutions

Chapter 30: Simple Solutions

****Three weeks later- August 21****st****, 2011****

****At the soon-to-be Bennetts****

****Cleo's POV****

I asked the girls to come here because I needed to talk to them about this whole marine park thing. Only Rikki and I knew about the mind wipe thing, and I already told her it failed, but she doesn't know the full story, and neither do Emma or Bella.

The other girls all put their babies in the play pen. Which is a lot big then the average play pen, and take a seat on one of the couches. I noticed that Emma and Bella are sitting on opposite sides again. I will have to ask Emma about it later.

"So Cleo, what's up?" Rikki asks.

"Well, first Rikki did mind wipe Lori and the owner, but it failed," I start, and Emma interrupts me.

"What do you mean, it failed?"

"About a week after we did it, I was called into Lori's office, and they showed me footage on the security tape of me and Lori finding me, and even of them telling me their new plan to use me in the dolpin show. They also had all their adsâ€¦ and stuff," I say.

"So, what happen?" Rikki asks.

"Well, they told me that I will be their mermaid after the baby is born, and then proceeded to intergate me about why they couldn't remember anything about what happened in that video," I say.

"And what did you say?" Bella asks.

"After about twenty minutes, I told her a half-truth. that the queen hes the power to wipe minds, but I told her that I didn't know the real name of the queen. Just that we call her 'the queen' and she lives deep in the ocean, father down than any human can go," I finish.

"Thank you, Cleo, for protecting me," Rikki says actually looking sincere.

"That's all great, but what does she do now?" Bella asks.

"Nothing, what can she do? It's not like she has another mermaid to take her place," Emma says.

"One of us could do it," Rikki says.

"They've been advertiseing her though, and more importantly that would reveal that we are mermaids, too, and put us in danger," Bella says. "Sorry Cleo, you're on your own."

"I thought we were in this together," I say hurt.

"We'll support you, but we can't risk our lives, too. Let me know, I have to go," Bella says before grabbing Ashley and leaving.

"What's up with her?" Rikki asks.

"She's been all about herself for the last month," Emma says.

"Yah, well that kind of hurt," I say.

"It's alright, we really are here for you, but even if one of us offered to take your place, your boss won't care. She wants you, and if we did offer she'd use us all not just take one for the other," Emma says.

"You're probably right. I should just do it, and hope for the best," I say.

"But if you need us, we are here for you, and Bella is too, she's just being a little selfish," Emma says.

"She's right, you can call at anytime," Rikki chimes in.

"Thanks guys that really means a lot to me, and I'm sure Bella will get over her selfishness."

****No POV****

Sophie sits at the cafÃ© waiting for her business partner. For the last three weeks she had gone out to Mako to wait and watch for the white mermaid. Although she had seen others will gold tails, she was determined to capture the white one because she was the first mermaid

she saw, and this mermaid was special with a white tail instead of gold.

The mermaid that she waited for, seemed to swim to that strange cavern that had a pool, and the crystals in the walls on specific days. Like Tuesday afternoons, and Friday nights, but the odd one was Sunday days. On Sunday mornings, this mermaid normally wasn't alone. She swim with a smaller merman that had a gold tail, and looked no older than three.

Sophie actually felt bad about possibly taking the merman's mother away, but this was business, and she promised herself that she would let him see his mother for free if the marine park accepted her deal.

She has seen the ads for Cleo as the "Mermaid", but she believed it to be just some scam, there's no way Cleo's a mermaid. So, she called the owner of the marine park, and set up a meeting with her.

Sophie finally had a plan to capture this mermaid, but she realized that she needed help. She thought about going to Will, but she knew that he, of all people, would be able to convince her not to do it. To appeal to her better side by saying that the mermaid is part human, and doesn't deserve to be on display. So, to avoid all that, she made a call to the marine park in hopes to make a deal with them instead.

"Ah, are you Sophie?" a woman asks.

"Yes, and you must be Miss Young," Sophie answers.

"I am, but please call me Johanna," Johanna says.

"Okay, Johanna, I have a proposition for you."

"Alright, lay it on me."

"I found a mermaid with a white tail. I know that Cleo is your fake mermaid, but you could have a real one in an exhibit, just like a dolphin in a tank for people to look at. You get her, but I get the credit for finding her, and I get the money," Sophie says.

"Okay, but how do you plan to catch her?"

"That's where I need your help. If you give me two guys that can do some heavy lifting, I have a plan. This is what we are going to do: first, the guys and I will drive out to Mako, they will drop me off on the island and drive out by the volcano. Then I will go to the land entrance to this weird pool at the bottom of the volcano, meanwhile the guys will wait until they see her pass, and place a gate on the underwater entrance. Once she's locked in, I will place a rag with chloroform on her mouth, causing her to black out. The guys will then undo the gate, and help me get her to the baot, and then we will dive back here, and she won't know what happened until it's too late," Sophie says with a smile.

"Sounds like my guys will be doing most of the work," Johanna says.

"I did find her, and come up with a plan, not to mention, I have her

schedule to visit the island down pat," Sophie replies.

"Okay, then I guess it's fair. How much do you want?"

"Millions, I'm not sure how many yet, but this mermaid will be worth so much to your park," Sophie says.

"But we don't know how much for sure," Johanna says.

Sophie thinks for a minute before saying, "Trust me, it will be worth it. I was thinking that 25 million will suffice, if she makes you more money, you can always give me more." The look on Sophie's face shows just how much this money will mean to her.

"I would agree, but this mermaid is going to be smarter than the average animal. Surely, she can plot a way to get out. If she does than I will lose out on money, a lot of money," Johanna says.

"Then keep an eye on her," Sophie replies.

"How about we do this daily? Every day I'll keep a total on how much she makes me, and I'll give you twenty percent," Johanna suggests.

"Seventy," Sophie counters.

"Thirty," Johanna raises.

"Sixty."

"I'll give you forty percent. No higher, I do have expenses," Johanna says.

"Fine, and you have to let her son see her for free," Sophie says.

"Deal, but you have to find out who he is, and bring him there yourself," Johanna says.

"Deal. I know that she always goes to Mako's pool cavern thing on Tuesday afternoons around three, so do you thin you could have two guys read to do this in two days?"

"Yes, I'll have them meet you at the pier at two, and they'll be wearing marine park t-shirts," Johanan says.

"Great, nice doing business with you," Sophie says sticking out her hand to Johanna.

Johanna shakes it. "See you on Tuesday."

****At the soon-to-be-Bennett's****

****Rikki's POV****

After Emma and Cleo left, Zane comes in to remind me that we are having our families over to tell them about our wedding plans. So, I start dinner because as always, I feel I should be prepared for them to be hungry.

Before long, they arrive, and dinner is ready.

So, we all sit down, and start eating.

"So, when are you guys getting married?" Lizzie asks.

"Well, we picked a day, and then found out it's a Thursday," I say remembering how disappointed I was.

"Well, is it going to be a big party?" Lizzie asks.

"No, just you guys, the girls and a few of his mates," I say.

"Then it'll be perfectly fine. If that's the day you want, that's the day you'll get. What day is it, anyway?"

"January 5th," I say.

"Then you'll be fine. You won't even have to worry about school," Lizzie says.

"Thank you. Anyways, it's going to be at the cafÃ©. We decided on a DJ, so that Bella, Lewis and Nate won't have to worry about a gig that night," I say.

"Nate's going to be my best man, and the girls and their boyfriends are going to be in the wedding party," Zane says.

"And I want you, Lizzie, to be my maid of honor," I say.

"Of course I will," she squeals excitedly.

"Good, so then we have all the details already sorted and thank you for our trip to Fiji," I say.

"You're welcome," my mom, dad, and Zane's dad say.

After that we continue talking about the wedding, and how excited everyone is. The twins will even get to be a part of it.

****Bella's POV****

Over the last three weeks, Emma has been leaving me every morning. Although I tried to get up when Ashley cries in the middle of the night, I failed because Emma always beat me to it. I refrained from putting in ear plugs, and really made an effort to make peace with her, and show her that I can take care of my kid.

It's true that before I was making excuses so that I could sleep more, but it wasn't because of lack of love for my daughter, or being inconsiderate to Emma, it was because sleep is important. I really do have issues falling back asleep, and we did agree to work together. However, I guess Emma feels that I don't know how to take care of my kid or how to be a team player. So, she leaves me and Ashley alone. Which is actually nice of her, I guess.

Ashley and I have formed a great bond, and I really love the peacefulness. She's more of a quiet baby that entertains herself more than crying to have someone else entertain her. It's really nice, and so not like Emma's girls, who cry all the time. Maybe that's why

she's so cranky, I know that I'll have to face her eventually, she's been avoiding me even when she is home, but it's been three weeks, so or later she'll have to talk to me. I'm just wondering when?

****At the beach****

****Emma's POV****

Over the last three weeks, I have spent way more time out of the apartment than in it. Luckily the weather has been nice, and the girls have loved it. Ash was upset at first about it. He said, "You have a home, and she shouldn't be chasing you out of it."

Mom was upset, too. She told me to bring the twins to her house when it was time for their nap. So, every day I've been going there around two, and somehow Ash normally calls me to tell me he's done for the day as soon as their nap is over. So, I go from there to his apartment, and then when it's time for bed, I go to mine. It seems like it's become a routine.

I've talked to both mom and Ash about this situation, and they both agree that something has to be done. Mom suggested convincing Will to let Ashley and Bella move in with him, but they are at odds right now, too. They still aren't dating, but at least he's standing by her. Helping her, although, he seems overly busy with his new job he won't tell us about.

Ash says that the four of us need to have a serious talk about this living situation we are dealing with because even though Will and Ash don't live there, they are affected by what goes on there. So, tonight being Sunday, Ash has decided to make dinner, and we will all talk. We even made sure that Will is going to be there.

I take a look at my watch, and notice that it's already five o'clock, and Ash texted me that dinner is at five thirty. So, I gather the girls, and head home.

I get there right on time, and Ash is setting the table. I put the girls in the play pen, and look around. I don't see Bella, Will or Ashley.

"What are they?" I ask.

"Running late, Bella gave Ashley to Will, and went for a swim, I called her, she should be here any minute. As for Will and Ashley, I haven't heard from him, but truthfully, my idea to resolve this problem, we won't need him for," Ash replies.

"And what is your solution?"

"I was going to wait until Bella got here, technically she gets a say," he says.

"But if you tell me and we are both on board with itâ€¦" I say.

"Are you sure we shouldn't wait?" he asks just as Bella walks through the door.

She looks a lot happier than she has in weeks, and she has a smile on her face. Maybe this is a good sign for this dinner.

"I feel great! How are you guys doing?" she asks.

"Good," we say together.

"Will says he can't make it, but he'll be by at about ten to drop off Ashley," Bella says with a smile.

"That late?" I ask.

"Well yah, if we keep her up late enough maybe she'll sleep through the night," Bella answers.

That logic is off, but I need her happy to actually listen to our ideas to fix our problems, so I ignore that.

"Dinner is ready then," Ash says.

He decided on pasta because it's something that we all like and he didn't want problems because he chose something we didn't all like.

We sit down, and begin eating.

"So, I know there have been problems with your living situation, and I've thought about it. I think I have a solution," Ash says.

"Okay, so tell us," I say.

"Bella and I switch places."

"What do you mean?" I ask.

"Bella and her baby take their things and move into my apartment. I take my things and move in here," Ash says.

"What? I like living here. Emma and I help each other, and if she hadn't been running away every day then we would get along better," Bella says.

"You don't help me, and Ash does. But ash, I don't know how I feel about us living together. Remember, there was a reason I said no in the first place," I say.

"I know and I understand that, but our babies are six and a half weeks old, and we've been working well together since then," Ash says.

"That does make me feel better, and we can have our own rooms," I say.

"And what about me? Don't I get a say?" Bella asks.

"No, we are giving you Ash's apartment, you've been living alone during the day anyways, besides it's cheaper and smaller. More fit for you and Ashley," I say.

"So, I don't get a choice," Bella says.

"No, but remember it is what's best for our friendship, okay?"

"I guess, when do we switch?" Bella asks.

"How about after dinner," Ash suggests.

"Okay," Bella answers.

Just like that my living arrangements have been fixed.

****Tuesday****

****At the docks****

****Two o'clock****

****No POV****

Sophie walks up to two guys that are wearing marine park t-shirts at exactly two o'clock.

"Are you Sophie?" one of them asks.

"Yes," Sophie replies.

"Alright, then let's climb aboard," the other one says.

The three of them climb onto a boat that says marine park on it, and set off for Mako island. They had already planned to drop Sophie off first so that she could get to the cave before the mermaid.

The boat ride there seems really long for Sophie who is beyond excited about capturing the mermaid, and making a ton of money.

Once they got to the island, it was about a quarter til three.

Sophie climbs out, and the guys turn the boat around, and head towards the opening in the island where the underwater entrance is.

Sophie moves into the forest, and makes her way to the above entrance. It takes her about ten minutes to get to the whole in the ground. She struggled on the way there since she had only been there a few times, but eventually she does. She slides down the hole as quietly as she can, so that if the mermaid she's chasing is already there, she won't try to run before Sophie can get the mermaid captured.

She peers around the corner, and sees the pool is empty, so Sophie waits quietly behind the wall for about fifteen minutes before she hears the sound of the water moving.

Sophie still sits quietly as she waits for the guys to lock the mermaid in. after five more minutes, she reveals herself.

Melanie looks up as Sophie jumps out from behind the wall.

Once Melanie realizes that this person wasn't someone who's supposed to know about the mermaids, she dives underwater without saying a

word. It doesn't take long for her to see the vars and the guys waiting under the water for her. So, she goes back to the surface.

"what do you want with me?" Melanie asks Sophie.

"I want to capture you, and put you on display at the marine park," Sophie says as she puts the rag over Melanie's face. It takes a few minutes of struggling but eventually it happens.

The guys proceed to take the bars off the entrance, and they help get Melanie on the boat and make their way to the main land.

****A/N Here you go, hoped you enjoyed, and hope that I'm fixing the issues with Bella's parenting.****

****H2oRikki: thanks for the review, and what do you think now that Sophie has the mermaid?****

****Zikki 3: I think Bella needed it, and thanks for your review, I hope you liked it.****

****TabiH2O: I like Cleo's job too, and I hope I'm getting Bella back to herself, what to do you think? And thanks for the review!****

****MagicMaker 494: Umm so it says you reviewed chapter 28 instead of last chapter so, I just wanted to answer in this chapter because I just got the review. Thanks for the vote for another story, and thanks for reviewing.****

****Swimmingym: things don't always work out the way we plan, right? And I guess Sophie finds out everything huh? And I'm full of surprises just wait for chapter 34 that's a surprise. Thanks****

****Chinaluv: thanks, my friend.****

****Kass: Do you want Zane's POV or No POV about Zane and things in his perspective sort of? Thanks for the review let me know.****

****Ditzy-dreamer: thanks for the review, and PMs it's awesome to hear what you have to say****

32. A Way Out?

Chapter 31: A Way Out?

****A few days later- Saturday****

****At the marine park****

****Cleo's POV****

I went to work as I normally do, well until this baby comes. Then I was told that I had to focus entirely on being the marine park's mermaid. The owner, Miss Young, says that I have to practice with the dolphins and the dolphin trainers as soon as my baby's born. She then

said that's all I'm going to have time for if I want to have any days off.

Yippee.

Halfway through my shift, I was taking a break that I now get because I'm a dolphin trainer and not an ice cream girl, and I overheard two other employees saying something odd.

They said that they heard that they got a real mermaid. That some mermaid was caught by someone who sold her to the marine park. There was other information going back and forth that I'm pretty sure is just rumors. Either way, I have to get to the bottom of this.

Knowing that if this was true, they would be hiding her until they can go public with her. I need to find Lori and Miss Young.

It takes me twenty minutes but I do find them feeding the sharks.

"Miss Young, Lori, I heard a rumor and I wanted to ask you about it," I say.

"Go ahead, Cleo," Miss Young says sweetly.

"I heard you captured another mermaid and she's going to be on display like the dolphins," I say.

Lori looks at Miss Young, he seems surprised, but the latter doesn't.

"Yes, it's true. It's only been a few says, but we want to keep her a secret until Friday when we will release the exhibit to those willing to pay the price. Just like the dolphin shows are going up when you are in them," Miss Young answers.

"Who is she? Have you talked to her? You know she probably has a life, and a family, you can't just lock her up," I say. Chances are I know this mermaid, and I can't not defend her, not after everything that has happened to us. I know if it was me, another mermaid, stranger or not, would stand up for me. So I have to too.

"We aren't telling anyone her name, but we are introducing her to the entire staff on Thursday, you can meet her then," Miss Young responds.

"Can you at least answer one question?"

"Sure, what is it?" Miss Young asks.

"What color is her tail?" I ask I need to know if this mermaid is one of the girls.

"It's white."

Oh no!.. it's Melanie.

A few days earlier (flashback)

****No POV****

Melanie had feared the worst when she couldn't escape the woman at the moon pool. When she finally woke up, she was a mermaid, in water, but her head was above the water. She figured that they weren't positive if she had gills or lungs, and thought it was best that she be on land so that she couldn't drown.

Melanie looked around. She was definitely in some tank thing that had the rock she was sleeping on, and was indoors. She couldn't see anyone so she pushed off the rock, and swam to the part of the tank that actually led somewhere. She then pulled herself out of the water, and had to wait for her tail to dry off. Too bad she didn't have a power anymore since the full moon since the full moon that changed her to the good side took all her powers away.

Just before her tail was almost dry, the same woman that was at the moon pool that night came walking in.

"Hey, you're up. Do you want something to eat," Sophie says.

Melanie just glares at her, and then figures that she must be watched or else they wouldn't know she was trying to get out, so she swims back to her rock.

"Hey please, give me a chance. I'm trying to be nice here," Sophie yells to her.

Melanie rolls her eyes at Sophie. She wasn't going to respond, but maybe she should.

"You want to be nice, let me go," She says.

"I can't do that, but I can bring you your son. I made that a deal with the owner of the marine park," Sophie says.

"Well, I won't tell you who he is, I'm not letting you do this to him, too," Melanie responds.

"Fine, have it your way," Sophie says before leaving.

****The present day- Saturday August 27****th****, 2011****

Sophie stands outside the door to the secret tank where the mermaid she captured is being held. She felt bad for the mermaid, but she went in his whole heartedly. She steels herself, and walks in again.

"Hi," she says.

"Hello," Melanie answers.

"I don't know why I'm trying again, seeing as the past few days have failed, but give me a chance. At least tell me your name," Sophie says hoping the mermaid will give her something.

"Why do you want my name?"

"So, we can stop calling the mermaid. I know that you have a name, and that you have a son. I know you have a life, but it's too late to

change what did. So, help me out here, please," Sophie says. She really had felt that maybe she did the wrong thing.

"You could let me out. You could stage a break out. Besides you are the only one that has talked to me so how do I know that there's anyone else involved," Melanie says.

"Because you are being watched, and I'm the only one talked to you because Johanna is afraid you might hurt her," Sophie answers.

"I don't trust you."

"And I don't blame you," Sophie says.

"I'm Melanie, but I'm not telling my son's name or his father's. I'm not sure I want them to know what happened. It'll probably scare my son because, as you probably know, it could happen to him, and I can't let that happen. Not if I can stop it."

"Don't worry, I won't let it happen either. And I'm Sophie," Sophie says.

"I would say that it's nice to meet you, but honestly I don't feel that way," Melanie says.

"Again, I understand. I'll be back later."

****At the cafÃ©****

****Emma's POV****

Cleo messaged everyone to meet at the cafÃ©. Ash had decided to keep the girls for me, as did Zane for Rikki, and Will for Bella. The three of us sit waiting for her when Nate comes in with Nathan.

He spots us, and makes his way with Nathan to our table.

"Have you heard from Melanie?" he asks me the second he's close enough.

"No, why?" I answer.

"She dropped Nathan off before her Tuesday afternoon swim, and never came back. It's been days, and I haven't heard her from her. I'm worried about her, your secretâ€¦ what if she was captured?" Nate says quickly and urgently.

"She was," a voice behind him says.

We all turn to look, and see Cleo walking up.

"Guys, we have a problem," she says.

"Yah, start off by telling me what you did to her, and how you know," Nate yells.

"I didn't do anything. I only just found out," Cleo says defending herself.

"Calm down, Nate, please tell us, what you know, Cleo," I say.

"I was at work, and overheard two employees talking about the marine park having a real mermaid. Instead of talking to them, I went straight to Miss Young, the owner. She confirmed that they did catch a mermaid, who is going to be on display for everyone to see, but they have to pay," Cleo says.

"They are never going to let her go?" Nate asks.

"Doesn't sound like it. The only reason I know it's her is because I asked what color the tail was. When she said white, I knew," Cleo says.

"Thanks for telling me, I'm going to go try to talk them into letting me see her," Nate says before leaving.

Cleo sits down, and I say, "We have to help her."

"I agree, but we already learned that my power to wipe winds, is crap. It only helped Cleo for a week," Rikki says.

"Well, I don't agree. She's not really part of our group, and we aren't in any danger. Why put ourselves in danger?" Bella asks.

"She is a mermaid, and our friend. We don't have to endanger ourselves to help her," I say.

"If we show that we care, people will figure it out, thus endangering us. We have to act like nothing happened. Besides, look at it this way, Cleo, you should be able to get out of your new job. Use this to your advantage, Cleo," Bella says before leaving.

I roll my eyes. She just seems to be having serious issues lately. Everything is about her, and she doesn't care for anyone else.

"I want to help, but we do have to be careful," Rikki says.

"Well, we can't freak out before they realize the exhibit. But we should be planning something," I say.

While Rikki and I continue planning a way to get Melanie out, Cleo says she has to go, and we watch her leave. Where could she be going?

****No POV****

Sophie had gone into the caf   for a drink, so that she could figure out a way to find out who Melanie, the mermaid, 's son is. She noticed that Nate and a young boy walked up to Bella and the others looking frantic.

Sophie itched closer, and overheard that Nate was worried about Melanie, and the boy saying something about his mommy. That's all she needed, she proceeded to go outside and wait for Nate to be alone, of course he'd have the boy, but she wouldn't have had to deal with the girls ruining everything.

She only had to wait about five minutes before Nate came running out as fast as he could with a two year old in tow.

"Nate!" Sophie yells.

"What?" he yells without turning around.

"I need to talk to you."

"Well, whatever it is, I'm sure that it can wait. I'm busy," Nate says.

"I can help you. I know where Melanie is, and I'm one of the few with access to her," Sophie says.

Nate stops in his tracks, causing Nathan to run into him.

"What do you mean?"

"I know what she is, and that the marine park has her. I was part of it, but I promised her, once I got to know her, that I would tell her son that she was okay, and bring him to her," Sophie says.

"You were a part of it, why should I trust you," Nate asks.

"Because I made sure that they didn't take your son, too," Sophie says.

"Nate, who had started to walk away, stops again. He turns around, and gives her this look that says he doesn't know if he can trust her and believe her.

"You have to believe me, I'm the only way you're going to see her," Sophie says.

He pauses, "Lead me to her."

****Cleo's POV****

After Bella left, I was thinking about what she said. Maybe I can use this to my advantage. Is it possible that I can get out of this? Could Melanie be my way out? Is it selfish of me to want her to have to deal with my problems?

As I struggle with my questions, I suddenly felt the need to leave. I said goodbye to the girls, and left, letting my feet carry me, whichever way I want. I continue to think, and move as if my remote.

I head to the main office. I wonder if she's even here?

I know, and she opens the door.

"Ah, Cleo, what brings you here?"

"Hi, Miss Young, I just wanted to talk to you," I say.

"Alright, have a seat."

We both sit, her behind her desk, and me in a chair in front of it.

"What would you like to talk about?"

"This whole mermaid thing," I say.

"What about it?"

"I know that you have a real mermaid, other than me. Since the public is going to know that I'm fake, won't it make more sense to use the real mermaid? So, people don't think that it's a rip off," I say.

"Ah, so you're telling me this out of concern for the park?"

"Yes."

"Well, Cleo, what if she doesn't want to do the shows. After all, she is our captive, here. She won't be getting paid like you, and she can't go home to her family," Miss Young replies.

"What if you did pay her, and she got to go home at night? Then you wouldn't need me, and could easily avoid the whole rip off thing," I say trying to convince her it's what's best.

"I don't know, Cleo. It sounds more like you are just trying to back out in the pretense of concern for the marine park," Miss Young says.

"No, I really do care about this place. I have, after all, worked here for a few years. This place is like my second home. I really like it here," I say at least half of it is true, I do care and like it here, but it's not my second home, and I'm not doing this out of care for the park either.

"Alright, I guess I can consider it. When are you due?"

"Any day, so I should actually be at home resting right now," I say.

"Alright then, I'll let you know after you've had the baby. Be careful getting home. Bye Cleo," she says before waving me off.

****No POV****

Sophie watched as Nate and Nathan talked to Melanie like she was more than just a creature, a mermaid. She could see why the boy, her son and also a merman, would understand, but how could Nate? He's not a merman, that much was obvious since he didn't hesitate to wrap his arms around Melanie, even though she was wet, and he didn't change like the boy did.

Sophie suddenly felt bad for what she did to the mermaid. Even though in her eyes, Melanie is just a mermaid, she even tries to use "mermaid" as her name, so that she can't feel any personal connection to her. However, something changed in her. She felt something for this creature. So much so that she needed someone to talk to.

So she texted Will to make sure he was at the boatshed. He was, and went there as fast as she could.

When she walked in, he was holding his daughter, trying to calm her

down. He looked tired and stressed. He didn't even know that she had walked in.

Sophie, feeling bad for her brother, walks up to him and takes Ashley in her arms. She grabs a bottle and gives it to her. Suddenly, all is better.

"How did you know that's what she wanted?" Will asks Sophie.

"I took a guess. Now I have something I want to talk to you about," Sophie says.

"Okay, but first, do you think you could help out with Ashley more because I suck at this," Will says.

"I'm sure that you aren't that bad, but yeah sure whatever."

"Wow, you really are distracted."

"Yeah, well. I have a lot on my mind."

"So spill."

"You know that I'm always busy trying to get us as much money as possible, that I just want to make a fortune off something, and never work again?"

"Yeah, what about it," Will asks.

"I found a way, and did it, but now I feel like I did something wrong," Sophie replies.

"What did you do?"

"I helped capture a mermaid for the marine park, but she has a son, and I saw him and the father talking to her after I brought them to her, and well they didn't treat her as a creature. They treated her like she was human. Now I feel like I shouldn't have done it, if they see her as human, shouldn't I?"

"Yes, you should. It was the wrong thing to do. Look at it this way, if Ashley or Bella were mermaids, would you do it to them?"

That's all Bella heard before she decided to walk away instead of getting her daughter.

****A/N hey guys, sorry for the delay, and shorter chapter. I'm hoping to find more time to write so I can update faster, anyways, if anyone wants other POVs that I haven't done. Let me know, hope this was good, thanks for the reviews and review some more****

****Chinaluv: glad you liked it, and that it brings light to your days, thanks. ****

****Kass: I couldn't fit it this time, but next chapter there definitely will be a Zane POV, thanks.:)****

****Zikki 3: yup*** I put that in there just for you, and maybe Sophie will have a change of heart, thanks.:)****

****H2oRikki:** did Cleo's reaction surprise you? Things might get interesting soon enough. And glad you liked the Bella and Ash switch. Thanks.:)**

****TaBiH2O:** I'm glad I could get Bella back to normal, and okay I shall put Zane's POV in the next chapter. Thanks**

33. I'm sorry

Hey guys, I'm sorry that this isn't a chapter, but I have something important to say. I received a review about me not updating so I wanted to explain why.

First, I'm sorry that I can't update until Friday or latest Monday.

Second, here's why I can't.

I am studying to be an engineer not a writer, I do writing for fun, not any other reason. Engineering is a very difficult, and time consuming.

I also work on the weekends, and have my family and boyfriend stuff that I have to take care of.

I want to thank you for reading, and I will try to catch up with my writing, but I can't garrintee anything, I'm sorry.

Finally, thanks to everyone who reviews, reads, and follows. Please stick with me.

34. It Doesn't Matter

Chapter 32: It doesn't matter

****Same day****

****Bella's POV****

Did I hear right? Did Will just tell Sophie that our daughter is a mermaid? Is he really that stupid? No, no Will knows better than that. He wouldn't turn his daughter over to that crazy money focused sister of his.

So, what's another reason it sounded like it? Gotta think, gotta think. After ten minutes of thinking, I decided there's only one option, I need to talk to Will.

That means heading back to the boatshed. Maybe Sophie will be gone by now.

By the time I get back to the boatshed, I can see Sophie walking out of it. Good, I need to talk to Will without her, I notice as she walks past me, her eyes are downcast. What could that mean?

I walk up to his boatshed, and knock. Since we've been distant with each other, I didn't feel like I should just walk in. he opens the door with Ashley on his shoulder, "Hey Bella, come in."

"Hey, Will," I say as I walk in and sit down.

"What's up? I thought that you weren't supposed to come get her for another hour?"

"I came early because I need to talk to you," I say.

"What about? I thought we had a good thing going, I've been around more, and you seemed to be doing better in your new place," Will says.

"It's got nothing to do with that. And I'm not really in my new place. I just don't get a choice," I say, I'm still upset with Emma about that.

"Alright, alright. So, what is it?"

"I came by earlier to get Ashley and I overheard something," I say.

"What did you overhear?" he asks looking nervous.

"Correct me if I'm wrong, but I thought I heard you ask Sophie if she was going to turn in our daughter because she was a mermaid," I say.

Secretly, I'm hoping that I'm wrong, that I misunderstood, but I just don't know what I would do if he really told Sophie the truth.

"You are wrong," oh what a relief, I sigh. "It was a question that was hypothetical, and you don't know how that conversation came about," Will says.

What? "Then enlighten me."

"She helped capture a mermaid, and was fine with it until she took the father and son to see the mermaid, and saw them treating her like she's human. Sophie explained that she saw a mermaid, a creature, not a person. I then asked her, if it was Ashley, for example, would she do it. She said of course not because Ashley is her family, but she needed to see that she was wrong," Will says.

I don't know what to say.

"Wait, Sophie is the reason that Melanie is stuck in a tank at the marine park?" I ask.

"I guess so. For the record, I planned to tell you," Will says.

"Sure, anyways, how did she find Melanie?"

"Well, my job is to train her to be a free diver like me, and I guess she was underwater when Melanie swam past her. She then went back multiple times so she would know when Melanie was most likely to be at the moon pool."

"Alright, well now the girls need to know," I say.

"No they don't," Will says. He looks like he's pleading with me to not tell them since it would make us even more hate her.

"Alright, I guess, but the girls are trying to find a way to get Melanie out," I say.

"How did you guys even know?"

"Wellâ€¦"

****Will POV****

After Bella left with Ashley in tow, I had to get to another diving lesson for my sister.

As we reach the place that we usually stop, and tell her that I have to go down first.

"Why?" she asks.

"I just do," I say because I can't exactly tell her that I need to make sure it's safe so that no other mermaids will be known by her.

So, I dive down and check it out. I don't see any of the girls or other mermaids, so I go back up and tell her.

"It's safe? Safe from what?" Sophie asks.

Uhhhâ€¦ "Sharks," I make up on the fly.

"You never checked for sharks before," Sophie replies.

"And I should have, what if you had gotten hurt because I haven't been checking," I say trying to sound like a good brother.

She gives me this look, then says, "This isn't about sharks, you can't lie to me, Will."

"I'm not lyingâ€¦"

"Will, tell me what this is about. Now." She says in a commanding tone.

"Alright, I'll tell you everything," I say.

****Thursday September 1****st****, 2011****

****Zane POV****

As I sit in my office doing paperwork, there is a sudden knock on my door, since I was expecting Rikki and Emma, I just yell, "Come in."

"Hey Zane, are you busy?"

Since I hadn't bothered to look up from my paperwork, the surprise voice caused me to look up. It's Nate.

"I guess not. What's up?"

"I'm freaking out over Melanie. We've visited her everyday this week, but we are no closer to figuring out a way to get her out of there, I don't know what to do. Today, they are introducing her to the staff today, and tomorrow she's an exhibit! What am I going to do? I don't want people to know I'm dating a mermaid," Nate says.

"The girls will find a way eventually. As for you not wanting anyone to know, are you embarrassed of her?" I ask.

"Wellâ€¦ I guess kind of."

"Kind of? Don't you love her? Haven't you learned to accept her and your son?" I ask looking down at Nathan sitting quietly on the couch.

"I love my son, I'm not ashamed of him. He couldn't control who his mother is. As for her, I care about her, but she chose not to change back to normal, and now look at what happened."

"You have to respect her decision and just to be clear, I'm confused about what happened, but for her, I don't think she could become human," I say.

"I guess."

"No guessing, you have to respect her, and being embarrassed of her isn't respecting her," I say.

"I do care for her," Nate says.

"I know, man."

****Same day****

****At the McCartney's****

****Cleo's POV****

Lewis is attempting to calm me down because I'm freaking out. The doctor told me I was due two days ago, so why hasn't she come yet? She needs to come. I'm supposed to go to the marine park for the meeting today, but how can I when I'm going to pop any minute? I can't become a mermaid in front of everyone.

"Cleo, honey, sit down. It's not good to be so stressed like this," Lewis says.

"How can I not to be stressed? She was due two days ago, and I'm supposed to go to work today," I say.

"Just tell Lori why you can't," Lewis says.

"I can't. Not unless I'm in labor, I can't get out of it," I say as a pain rips through me body.

I've been having pains, but it's probably just the stress.

"Cleo, what was that?" Lewis asks, it seems he finally noticed.

"It just a slight pain," I say pushing it aside like it's nothing, which it probably is.

"Cleo, you are in labor," Lewis says jumping up.

"But my water didn't break," I say confused.

"Don't you remember, it doesn't need to."

"Oh," I say.

"How much time passes in between each contraction?"

"About five minutes," I say.

"Alright, we need to get going," Lewis says running upstairs, and dialing a phone in one hand.

He comes back down just as fast as he went up. He's just clocked off the phone, and is holding my overnight bag in his hand.

"Come on, we need to get going."

"who'd you call," I ask curious.

"the doctor then Rikki, now come on. The doctor said you're really close," Lewis answers.

"Alright, I guess I need to get going, then?" I ask torn because suddenly I'm scared of my impending labor.

"Yup, let's go."

****Rikki's POV****

Emma and I were on our way to the cafÃ© to talk to Zane about eah of us returning to work and school. Lizzie has the twins for me as Ash has the girls for Emma. We were talking about that and Melanie, when Lewis called me. He talked very fast. All I got was "Cleoâ€|laborâ€|hospitalâ€|now."

I just clicked off, and turn to Emma.

"That was Lewis. I think Cleo's in Labor," I say.

"Then you better go," Emma replies.

"Okay, can you tell Zane what happened?"

"Yes, of course, just go."

I nod, and take off running.

****Lewis's POV****

Cleo and I got to the hospital, and signed in. After the nurse checked her, I realized just how close we probably came to having our daughter in our home. Rikki said that she was on her way, but the impending birth will be soon. The doctor told me that it would most likely be within the hour.

We got everything situated, and then I realized just how nervous I am. I never admitted it to Cleo, but I'm terrified, even though we are in this together, and we are married that doesn't mean I'm ready for a kid.

I love this kid, I love Cleo, and I can't wait to be a family, but this is terrifying. I'm not sure how the other guys are handling it without any problems. I haven't heard any complaints from any of them, which is different. I should be the most prepared, I should be the most ready, but I feel like the least ready.

I'm not sure I can handle this.

****Zane's POV****

Emma comes running in the office after Nate left.

"Rikki's gone to the hospital," she says.

"What? Did something happen? Is she okay?" I ask immediately worried.

"She's fine Cleo went into labor."

"Oh, then why did you come running in here like she was hurt?"

"I don't know, I felt rushed."

"Alright, then, we'll talk about school and work later, okay?" I ask when I've calmed down."

"Fine by me."

****At the hospital****

****Cleo's POV****

Apparently, Lewis got me here just in time. I was alright at eight centimeters, and the pain was getting worse with each passing minute. Lewis was then taking the time to think of stuff to distract me, but every story seemed to fail. I couldn't focus on anything other than the pain.

Suddenly, Rikki comes skidding into the room.

"I got here as fast as I could," Rikki says in a hurry.

"Now that you are here, we can break her water. Please get into position, and here are your scrubs," the doctor says preparing to do what she said.

Rikki dawns the scrubs and gets into place. Her right hand on my left shoulder, and her left hand in my left. Lewis stands on my right side, holding my right hand.

One everything was set, the doctor tells me to start pushing. It was the hardest thing of my life. Pushing my daughter out of me couldn't compare to anything else in the world. Twenty minutes later, one final push, and I could hear my baby's first cry.

The doctor wiped her off before handing her, purple tail and all to me. I smile down at her, and then look up at Lewis. He's got a huge smile on his face. Then I remember Rikki.

"Thanks Rikki, you can let go now," I say switching my gaze to her.

"Oh right, well congratulations to you guys, I don't want to invade your new family time. So I'll just get going," Rikki replies.

"Okay, thanks," I say.

She gets to the door before turning around and asking, "What's her name?"

"Catherine Marie McCartney," I say.

"It's beautiful, and she's on the first of the month, just like mine. Anyways, bye, see you around," Rikki says before finally leaving.

We sit in happiness for ten minutes before it hits me.

I have to call the owner.

"I have to call her, and tell her."

"Call who, and tell who, what?" Lewis asks.

"The owner."

He hands me the phone, and nods.

I dial her number, and wait.

"Ah, Cleo, let me guess, you can't make it because you had your baby."

"Yes, I called to let you know," I say.

"Okay, well thanks," she says sounding like she's going to hang up.

"Wait! Am I cleared of being a mermaid in the dolphin shows?"

"Oh Cleo, I never meant for that to work out," she answers.

My stomach drops, she lead me to believe nothing, but a lie. I don't even know what to say.

"You start at 11 on Monday, see you then."

****On Monday****

****11 AM****

****At the Marine Park****

****Emma's POV****

I'm currently waiting on the dolphin show to start with my girls, Rikki, her kids, Bella, her daughter, and Cleo's daughter. Cleo's performing in her first ever dolphin show as a mermaid. We all came to support her, since none of us have gone back to school, yet. Rikki and I still need to talk about that with work stuff.

Technically, I'm watching Catherine, Cleo's baby, but we are all really contributing. I'm surprised that Bella's offered to do most of the work. I guess living on her own has changed things. She really isn't that bad mother that I made her out to be. Maybe I should've given her more of a chance, but it's too late now. Things are going well with Ash, and I don't want to go back to what things were with Bella. Even if she's changed, our friendship is better off this way.

Anyways, I'm worried about Cleo. Things are rough for her. She told us about how she tried to get out of it using Melanie's captivity, but it didn't work. I was appalled, but understanding. She just wanted to save herself, which is sort of understandable.

"Do you think anyone will think she's real?" Rikki asks.

"Honestly, I don't know. Oh look, it's starting," I say.

****Lewis POV****

I had to go to work, but I kept thinking about Cleo throughout the whole thing. How can I think about work or school when Cleo is at work, as a mermaid, showing off her secret for money. It's not fair. Her secret is exposed, and I feel like people won't believe that it's fake.

The thoughts running through my head, they all keep saying that. They keep saying the same thing. That people will think that it isn't a ruse, especially after seeing Melanie in a tank as a real mermaid. Everyone is going to question Cleo, and it isn't fair.

I know that she's scared, and I can't even be there for her like I should be because of work and school. I should be with her or at least my daughter.

I only got a few days as a family before work and school, and everything else got in the way. If only we were older, but I love them both, and though things have been tough maybe it's for the best, everything happens for a reason.

****Cleo's POV****

I'm so nervous as I swim out underneath the water with the dolphins. I grab onto Ronnie's fin as planned, and he takes me to the surface, around the show's area, before I swim off to my rock. I was told to sit on my rock, and do some of the tricks with the dolphins, I guess I'm still acting like the trainer. I'm just in the water with a tail.

The owner wanted me to do tricks, but there isn't much I can really do. I tried to explain to her that it's difficult to do that. Our tails are heavier, and more difficult to manage than a dolphin's. She told me to try and show off, sit on my rock, and wave, and to go close to the crowd so they can get a better look.

Throughout the whole show, I did few commands with the dolphins, which the crowd loved. I swam around the pool with the dolphins, waved from my rock, and then surprised them by going up close.

The show ends, and I swim with the dolphins out of the show pool and into a relaxing pool for the dolphins. I swim to shore, and am met by Miss Young.

"That was great, Cleo! Now I need you to do pictures and autographs," she greets me.

"Okay, um how am I supposed to get there?" I ask because if I dry off in front of anyone they will know.

"Some of my men will carry you there, and there will be a bucket of water, so that you won't change back," she tells me then waves the guys over.

They pick me up carefully, and carry me, slowly, to the designated area. I can see a line already formed. They place me on a rock that's angled so that I have to lean on my one arm. This is going to stick.

But I smile and wave because I don't get a choice, and I'm being paid.

I hear someone introduce me as they remove the fake wall thing blocking the people's way. They start screaming when they see me. I'm not sure why they are excited, they should know that I'm 'fake'. At least, I hope that's what they believe.

For the next hour, I meet plenty of kids and adults, signed so many autographs I lost count and smiled so much my face hurts. Miss Young finally came, and said that there will be a 45 minutes break in which I could eat, and then there will be another dolphin show. The guys take me into a changing room, and leave at my insistence.

I grab a towel and begin to dry off. It only takes a few minutes since I was barely wet. I was only wet enough to keep my tail. After I'm done, I walk out and find the girls. I know they planned to eat with me.

Apparently, they knew where I was going to come out at as they were sitting at a table not far from the door. All with food laid out and a fourth plate set next to Bella.

"Hey girls, is this for me?" I ask as I approach.

"Of course," Bella answers. So, I sit down, and begin eating.

"So, how was it?" I ask a couple of minutes of silence.

"It was good, people were really excited," Emma answers.

"Yeah definitely," Rikki says.

"It was weird to see you as a mermaid in public though," Bella says.

"I know, it was weird for me to do it," I say.

"But there's nothing you can do," Emma says.

"maybe it'll get easier," Bella offers.

"I hope so, it's bad enough learning to breastfeed, and how to be a mother, but then to add being a mermaid in the dolphin shows? I didn't even plan o work for a few weeks. I miss my baby, I'm supposed to be the one with her all the time, and only a few days after I brought her home, I have to leave her," I say. I truly am upset at having to leave Catherine with the girls.

"It'll be alright. We are here to help," Bella says. I see Emma through her a look, but Bella doesn't notice.

"Yeah, I suppose."

"At least you're not Melanie," Rikki says quietly.

"This is true. I feel bad for her, but what can we do?" I ask.

"At this point, I don't think we can do anything," Bella answers.

"There has to be something," Emma says.

"Em, we've tried. We've been wracking our brains for over a week now. If there was something, we would've come up with it by now," Rikki says sounding resigned.

"We can't leave her, we have to keep trying. Listen to me, this is possible, we can do this. Anyways, aren't we supposed to be meeting Ash and Zane about the whole going bak to school, and work thing at three?" Emma asks.

"Oh yeah, Bella, do you want us to take Catherine until Cleo gets off?" Rikki asks.

"No, I've got her," Bella says.

"Good because I have to get back to work, thanks," I say before leaving.

A/n there you have it, chapter 32. Sorry if it's too long, let me know if it's too short, or boring? Sorry for the delay, again, I hope to get the next one up by next Friday or Monday after the latest. Thanks for all the support, for anyone reviewing previous chapters, thank you since most were guests, I'm sorry I won't be replying. To others, here you go.

Kass-here is the guys POV's you have asked for, I'll put more in the next few chapters.

Swimngym-thanks for the review for both the last chapters, I hope this one follows it well, did you like the guys POVs? And thanks for the support about the wait.

Guest-I'm glad it cheered you up, thanks, please give me a name so I will continue to reply.

****Zikki3-** do you think Sophie has truly changed? Thanks for your support as before, and I hope the wait was worth it.**

****H2ORikki-** I try to even the POV's out, but if most want one POV or the other, I'll change my focus to that POV, thanks for understanding.**

****TaBiH2O-** thanks for your review, but it's not even about my social life, it was about schoolwork, but thanks for understanding. Thanks for the review. **

35. What can we Do?

Chapter 33: What can we do?

****Same day-** Monday, Sept. 5****th****, 2011**

****Rikki's POV****

As Emma and I walk towards the cafÃ©, Rosemary begins crying. We stop, and Emma picks her up, and begins rocking her back to sleep. It takes a few minutes before we start walking again.

"You know, it's weird, James will just lay there quietly even when he needs something, but Maria, the second she's wake she is crying for attention," I tell Emma.

"Yah, both my babies are like Maria. I wish that at least one of them was like that, but if one cries, they both usually start crying. It's nice when they are happy though," Emma says.

"Yes, it is. I guess every baby is different. So, do you have a plan for who's going to take care of the girls while you are in school?" I ask.

"Kind of, he has day classes right now that end at three, and I switched my classes for night classes, but we both have work, too. You guys know about his internship, right?"

"Yes, we do, but that's still a few months off, right?"

"Yes, anyway, school is planned, work is the issue," Emma says.

"Well, then it's time to fix it," I say as we reach the cafÃ©.

We go in, and head for the office since that's where the four of us will be talking. Ash was already sitting on the couch waiting for us to come. He immediately gets up, and kisses Emma. When they break apart, he says, "Zane'll be back in a few minutes."

"Thanks, I guess we should just have a seat," I say. Emma and I sit down on either side of Ash, and turn our strollers around so we can see our babies.

It took longer than we thought, but eventually Zane walks in.

"Sorry, I'm late," he says.

"It's alright," Ash says.

"So, let's talk about you guys first, Rikki and I could always stick to what we are doing now," Zane says.

"Alright well, all my classes were understanding, and willing to switch to the night class, so Ash can go to school during the day, like he has been, and I could go at night," Emma says.

"Okay, but what about work?" Zane asks.

"Well, Ash and I could both work on the weekends, my mom and Jenna said they would babysit for us. As for as the week goes, I know he's currently working five days a week, is there a way to make it so he works four, and I work three? He's off Fridays now, and can work the day shift or he can stay home, and I can work," Emma says.

"So, Saturday, Sunday, you both work. And you want to work Friday mornings?" I ask.

"Yes, that just leaves his other two days," Emma says.

"How about Wednesdays, and then a random day depending," Zane says.

"Alright, just let us know. We need to make sure child care is taken care of," Emma says.

"No problem, we'll have it every other week that he'll get one more day," I say.

"That will work," Ash says.

"Thanks guys, do we need to stay for you guys to figure out your schedules?" Emma asks.

"No, we can handle it," I say and they leave.

"So, what do we want to do? I don't have class on Fridays, either," Zane says.

"I know, and I managed to switch some of my class times, but Tuesdays are a bit of a problem," I say taking out my class schedule and Zane's.

"Well, the only overlap is Tuesday from 2:30 to 4, perhaps your mom and dad could watch them? I can be there at four thirty," Zane says.

"Well, don't you work, after all, you are the boss," I say.

"Well, what if we keep a play pen in the office, I'm in the office more often than not, and as you said I'm the boss," Zane says.

"Are you sure?" I ask.

"Yes, I don't know why we didn't do this before, now I can spend more time with them," Zane says happily.

"If you say so, what about my days then, does it matter, if we are just going to keep a play pen in the office?"

"No, I guess not."

"Alright, well, they are getting tired, I'm going to take them home, and put them down for a nap," I say.

"Wait, you work today, let me do that."

"Okay," I say surprised.

****No POV****

Melanie has been on display since Saturday which is only about three days, but she's been in captivity for roughly two weeks. They won't let her regain her human legs for even a short while, so she sleeps on a rock that is part of tank. She was currently trying to sleep so that the people paying to see her will get bored of her and leave.

As she tries to appear asleep, she overhears two women talking.

"All I'm saying is, that Cleo had a bucket of water by her for a reason," the first woman says.

"To make it seem realistic, there's no way she's a real mermaid, she has legs," the second woman replies.

"Maybe mermaids can be human, too, like when they are not wet," the first woman argues.

"That's crazy talk!"

"But seriously, think about it, Cleo looks exactly like this mermaid, except the color. Doesn't that confuse you," the first woman says.

"Maybe, but they could have just modded Cleo's tail after the real mermaid's," the second woman points out.

"Really, she was pregnant, right? Well, how do you explain how the "Costume" fits so perfectly?"

"Ummmâ€¦I don't know, but does it make a difference?"

"Yes, that means mermaids could be among us, and she could have a life, a family and we are keeping her from that," the first woman explains.

"We aren't doing anything, the marine park is. So, stop caring."

"But I do care, what if we could do something to free her? Would you do it?"

"That depends what do you have in mind?"

"You'll see," the first woman replies before they walk away out of

Melanie's earshot.

Melanie stopped faking her sleep to get a look at the two women, maybe they will actually come up with a good idea that will free her. They actually seem to care more than her so called friends.

Then she realizes that this could be trouble for Cleo, who else thinks that Cleo is a real mermaid?

****A few days later****

****At the cafÃ©****

****Bella's POV****

I was currently sitting at the cafÃ© with Ashley in my arms, and Cleo sitting across from me with Catherine in hers. It's her first day off since Monday, and you can see how tired she is.

"So, how do you like being a mother?" I ask.

"I like it, but I haven't gotten time to spend with her, I've been at work more often than not," Cleo responds.

"it'll be alright, it could be worse."

"How so?"

"You could be Melanie."

"That's true, I feel so bad for her. No one can think of anything to fix this mess. Nate's been going everyday to visit her, but it's just not the same, and you can tell. And if Nate's having a rough time, Nathan's just miserable," Cleo tells me with a sad look.

"that poor boy doesn't deserve that, and I can't believe that Sophie's responsible," I say although I can sort of see her that heartless.

"Sophie's responsible for this?"

"Oh yah, Will told me last week that Sophie admitted what she did, and that she feels bad about it," I say.

"But she did it? Can you imagine what would happen if she found out about us?"

"I already know what would happen."

"Oh no, she found out about you, too?"

"No, Will asked her hypothetically what she would do it say Ashley was a mermaid or I was," I say.

"And?"

"She said that we are her family, and despite our differences, she couldn't do that to someone she knows, and Will cares about," I say.

"So, because she didn't know Melanie, it was okay to ruin her life?"

"I guess, but she feels bad about it now," I say.

"It's too late, isn't it? Anyways, let's talk about something else," Cleo says.

"Alright," I say.

"How's living alone?"

I look at her in surprise. I guess I wasn't expecting that, and I have to really think about it. How is living alone?

"Sucks, honestly, I'm lonely most of the time, that's why I asked you here. I don't like being alone," I say.

"But you have Ashley," Cleo says.

"Which is great when she's awake, but she's a baby, she sleeps a lot," I explain.

"Well, duh."

"So, I'm more alone than anything. Will's not there more than ten minutes, and no one comes to visit," I say.

"I can try to visit," Cleo says trying to cheer me up.

"It's not the same as someone coming home to you at night. Even though she was gone all day, I felt safer knowing she was there in case something happened at night," I say.

"Aww.. it'll be okay. Maybe you and Will will work out your problems soon."

"I wish."

****Same day****

****Emma's POV****

I was taking care of the girls until I switch with Ash at four. He's off work, so he just had class, and I have my classes tonight. It's only three so I have another hour before he gets home, and I have to go to school. It's only been a few days, and I'm suddenly more tired than ever. I've kept up with my school work so at least I'm not as far behind as Rikki.

Suddenly, there's a knock at the door, I wonder who it is?

Carrying Lilly-Anne in my left arm, I walk to the door, and open it. It's Will.

"Hey Emma, I was wondering if you have a minute," Will says.

"Uh, sure come in."

He walks in and sits on the couch.

"Would you like something to drink?"

"No, I'm fine."

"Okay, so do you need something?"

"Actually, you, Bella's birthday is on Saturday, and I wanted to plan something nice for her. I kind of have the present, but I wanted to do more than that," Will says.

"I thought you weren't her boyfriend anymore, why do you want to do something so nice for her?"

"I'm not, but I love her, and one day I hope to marry her, but we do need the space. To be ourselves first."

"What does that mean?" I ask.

"It means that we need to be a part so that we can figure out what we want for ourselves before we can complete each other the way we should. Anyways, I thought I'd do something nice for her."

"Okay, well, what did you have in mind?"

"Well, I wanted to give her a night off from Ashley, first, so do you think you or Ash could watch her?"

"Of course, I know she's been a better mom since she moved out," I say.

"Yes, she has. Anyways, I'm kind of a bad cook, and I know that you and Ash like to cook, so I was wondering if one of you will cook it for us? I'll pay you, I promise."

"Uhhhâ€¦i don't know, Will. I can't exactly commit Ash to that because if I'm watching the girls, he would have to be the cook for your dinner," I say.

"Okay, but can I ask him? He might want to more if I talk to him as a man, you know, instead of hoping he'd give in to you," Will says.

"alright, you can talk to him, but it's already Thursday, s you better talk to him tonight. Uh, I would come back at like 6 or 7, give him time to relax, and feed the girls," I tell him.

"Thanks, Emma, I'll come back. Byes," he says as he gets up and leaves.

Wowâ€¦he actually cares.

****At the marine park****

****Around 4:30pm****

****No POV****

Nate walked to Melanie's inside tank entrance, so that he and Nathan could see her for dinner like he has been since he's been allowed to

see her. Nathan trails behind him holding the small takeout bad.

"Hey love," he says when he spots Melanie laying on the ground.

She looks over at him as he approaches.

"Hi."

"That doesn't sound happy," Nate comments.

"Do I sound sad?"

"No," Nate answers.

"Than what do I sound like?" Melanie asks.

"You sound thoughtful," Nate says.

"I am thoughtful, I overheard something today, I'm considering it as a way out," Melanie says.

"really? What is it?"

"Whether or not mermaids are humans and have lives. There were arguing over whether or not they should bring awareness, and let me go," Melanie says.

"Maybe, I'm just a little confused, you want everyone to know that you're a mermaid, but human, too?"

"yes, tell everyone that I'm not just some creature. That they should care that I'm a fellow human being, and I'm locked up because I'm different," Melanie says.

"Alright, and I think I know who can help," Nate says.

****At about six****

****Ash's POV****

I just got a call from a fellow coworker, they need me to cover their shift, but there's a problem. I have the girls. I've been calling around for a babysitter, but everyone's busy. I've got one last shot: Zane.

So, I dial his number and take a deep breathe.

"Zane speaking."

"Hi Zane, it's Ash."

"I know, do you need something."

"That guy that's supposed to work tonight called and asked me to work," I say.

"And?" He asks prompting me to continue.

"I can't find a babysitter, and was wondering if I could bring them

to work? Like leave them in the play pen?" I ask hopefully.

"Sure, I have mine in the office with me, so I don't mind watching yours."

"Thanks so much, I'll be there soon."

"No problem."

I already have the girls ready, so I grab their bags, and my apron, and walk out the door. I get halfway there when suddenly, "Ash! Ash." Someone's calling me I turn around.

It's Will.

****Will's POV****

I saw Ash walking the girls, and thought 'here's my chance'. It took a few yells, but he did turn around.

"Hey Ash, I want to ask you something," I say.

"Okay, well, I'm in a hurry, do you mind walking and talking?"

"Not at all," I say and then we begin walking in the direction he was originally walking in.

"So what do you want?" Ash asks.

"Emma's going to babysit Ashley on Saturday as a treat for Bella's birthday, but I wanted to make her dinner and I can't cook. I know that you are a fantastic cook, and I think Bella deserves the best, so please, will you do it?" I ask hopefully, I understand if he says no, but with everything that's happened, I just want Bella to have a great birthday.

He gives me this look like he can't believe that I'm asking him this. I try to give Ash the puppy eyes, but it would probably work better if I was a girl.

"I'll do it, but only because I can see that you truly want her to have a great birthday. And after dinner, you have to come have cake with us," Ash says.

"Deal," I say.

****At the cafÃ©****

****Zane's POV****

After I got off the phone with Ash, Nate comes bursting in my office without knocking.

"Hey, it was closed for a reason. The kids are sleeping," I say glancing at my twins. They are just so perfect. I'm happy that we left a play pen here so that I could work and take care of them.

"Sorry, it's just, there something that could finally help us with Melanie being locked up."

"So tell me."

"Awareness, we tell everyone that mermaids are human, too. That they deserve freedom."

"What will that really do?" I ask totally confused.

"It will get people to challenge the marine park. We could petition to get her freed, and to protect future mermaids from landing in the same predicament," Nate says.

"I think it's brilliant, I'll call everyone here, we will start tonight."

A/N here you guys go, for reference I don't know the next time I'll be updating, my boyfriend is leaving in a month and I want to spend as much time with him before he does. It should be some time between next Friday and the Friday after. Thanks for everything guys!

Kass- thanks for saying sorry, but honestly after I read that, I felt like it was my fault â€|after all I did say I would update every week on the same day, but I got behind, that was my fault. And I'm honored that you look forward to it so much, you were upset because it wasn't up. Anyways, thanks for your reviews, and do you like the guys POVs? Oh and you have to have a fanfiction account, do you have one?

H2oRikki- sorry it was long, was it too long? And I am putting different POVs, did you like the guys POV? Thanks.

Zikki3: thanks, I'll address what Sophie knows next chapter, I added that part in way after I wrote that chapter and the one after, so I didn't fit it into this one, sorry, but it gets addressed in Riots which is the next chapter.

**Swimngym- thank you for understanding, and wishing me luck with my schoolwork, in about a month, I'm going to have a lot more time because I won't have to devote any time to actually being with my boyfriend. Also, I'm glad that you liked the boys POVs, from now on I'm going to try to put it in more. If people like it that is. Thanks again. **

36. Riots

Chapter 34: Riots

Same night

At school

Rikki's POV

I was sitting in class just gazing off into space, when my phone went off. Then I heard Emma's phone go off next to me, and Lewis' phone in front of me. It must have been a mass text to everyone in the group. So, I pull it out, and look at it.

Nate has a plan. Meet at the cafÃ©. A.S.A.P.

I look at it, and think 'Crap, I'm supposed to meet the merman king.' What should I do? Blow him offâ€¦ probably, after all, it's been a while, I should just do the same thing that he's done to me to him.

As I'm thinking this, apparently Lewis has turned around.

****Lewis' POV****

Zane texted the whole group that Nate had an idea, so I decided to ask Emma and Rikki if they knew anything about this, but when I turned around a few minutes ago, Rikki looked so lost in thought.

"Earth to Rikki, come in Rikki," I say trying to get her attention.

"Very funny Lewis," she responds.

"I know. Anyway, do either of you have any idea as to what's going on with Nate?"

"No idea," Emma answers before returning back to taking notes.

"Me either, but I'm supposed to meet the merman king today," Rikki says.

Merman king? Have I really been missing that much? I used to know everything about the girls, and now I feel like I know nothing. Apparently, Rikki can see my confusion.

"No one's really known about it. I kind of forgot about it until now. I guess mermaids and mermen live in different worlds, and he wants to meet me since I'm the new queen. And talk to me about other mermaid stuff, I guess," Rikki says.

"Well, he can wait, obviously, we have something more pressing, but could I come with you when it happens?" I ask because meeting someone who probably has all the answers is all I've wanted since this whole thing began.

"I suppose, any particular reason?"

"He probably has all the answers."

"I thought Mrs. C had all the answers," Rikki says.

"Yah, but she doesn't tell us straight out, she beats around the bush and he's probably been around a lot longer."

"Why do you want answers anyway, you aren't affected by this like we are."

"I've been here for you girls, I've always felt like I'm almost one of you, and I just want answers maybe even more than you do."

"Alright, I guess I see your point," Rikki says.

"Thanks," I say before turned around for the remainder of class.

****Bella's POV****

Zane's text made me rush to the caf   with Ashley in tow. I go to the office because that's where Ash points to when he sees me. I walk in expecting to be late, but only Zane, Nate, and the kids are there.

"Hey Bella, you are the first are here. Rikki texted me saying her, Lewis, and Emma are in class, they'll be out soon," Zane tells me as I enter.

"Alright then, is it okay if I place Ashley in the play pen?" I ask.

"go right ahead, almost all the other kids are playing in there," Zane says with a smile.

"Yah, why is that?"

"Ash had to cover a shift, and Emma and Rikki are at school. Besides, I love kids, so I don't mind," Zane says.

That's not what I expected. He of all people should be the one that didn't like kids.

I sit down on the couch, and make myself comfortable, it might be a while.

****Will's POV****

I got the text while Sophie and I were eating.

"Sorry Soph, I have to go."

"Where are you going?"

"I just have to meet the guys," I say trying to be vague.

"Will, is this about their secret? Or Melanie?"

"Yes, Nate has a plan to get Melanie out, and I don't think they'll trust you being there."

"Well, they will just have to deal with it," Sophie replies always the stubborn one.

"Fine but I can't garuntee they will accept it."

"Trust me, they will," Sophie says with a wicked smile.

****Cleo's POV****

As soon as I could, I went to the caf  . If Nate has a plan to help Melanie than it will probably help me, too.

When I walk in, I go straight for the office, everyone's here except

Will.

"Good, now we just need Will," Ash says when he spots me.

I smile, and put Catherine in with the other kids and sit next to Lewis and Emma on the floor, maybe we should've done this in the cafeteria not the office.

We wait in silence for ten minutes, when finally Will knocks on the door before entering, but he's not alone.

"What is she doing here?" Nate asks with contempt in his voice.

"I'm here to help. I told you that I feel bad, but if you don't let me help, I'll expose everyone else. We all know Melanie isn't the only mermaid around here," Sophie says with a spark in her eyes.

"Sophie, you can't threaten them to let you help," Will says before anyone can jump in.

"Fine whatever," Sophie says.

"Okay, Nate thinks that we should tell everyone that Melanie is human, too. Bring awareness to the fact that she's not just some creature. That she has a life and a family that needs her," Zane says.

"What? No, we can't do that," Emma says.

"Why not?" Nate asks.

"Because then people will know that mermaids can be people, and they might start thinking other people are hiding it too," Bella says.

"But most people will not care, they'll just want her free because she is human, too," Zane says.

The two begin an argument that is joined by all the others, so I stay quiet. Either way, I'm still in the dolphin shows, but maybe this could change things. Maybe people will petition against the marine park and I won't have to be in the shows anymore.

"I think we should do it," I say. It stops everyone from their yelling.

"Cleo," Lewis says with an unsure sigh.

"I'm being serious, no one has to know that we are mermaids, too," I say.

Everyone stops and thinks for a minutes, and then suddenly everyone is nodding.

"Alright, I made fliers and Zane thought that we could hold a concert here, like a benefit," Nate says happily.

"A benefit?" Rikki asks.

"Yah, something that will gather people who want to listen to what we have to say, and it can be done all at once," Zane says.

"I guess, when?" Rikki asks.

"Uhhhâ€¦. Noon or maybe one tomorrow," Zane shrugs.

"I guess we have to do this fast then," Emma says.

"Yes, now everyone grab some fliers and get going," Zane says.

And we all do.

****Will's POV****

After everyone grabbed their fliers and kids, they left. It was down to just Sophie, Bella and I in the office.

"Will, I'm going to go, if you need me to help with Ashley tonight, let me know," Sophie says before leaving.

As soon as the door closed behind Sophie, Bella turns to me with an angry look on her face.

"I can explain," I say before she can even begin.

"Oh really? You lied to me, you told me that it was hypothetical. That she had no idea," Bella says angrily.

"And at the time, that was true," I say.

"If that's true, then how come she knows?"

"I decided to be more careful, so that none of you ended up with the same problem. Unfortunately, she knows me too well and when I tried to cover it up by saying that I was checking for sharks," I explain.

"And she didn't believe you, so you just told her our secret? What part of secret don't you understand? You should've left it alone, Will,"

"It was bound to happen sometime," I say, which I believe it true.

"I don't care, that wasn't up to you. You still taking Ashley?"

"Yes," I say.

"Good, then I'll see you tomorrow," she says grabbing some fliers and leaving.

****The next morning -9 AM****

****At the soon-to-be Bennetts****

****Zane's POV****

I was surprised to be woken up by not the twins, but Nate. He stayed

up all night, posting fliers and trying to get people to come for the benefit thing. After every person he could convince to come was gone, he started to research petitions and things. I guess that it depends on what is being petitioned, but the thought is that for this to have at least 500 people to sign. He came early this morning to give us our petition form, and said that one of each couple should be at the café and the other one out and about to get signatures.

>I agreed, and then told him that he needed rest, but he refuses to. Sam, Cleo's stepmother and Melanie's good friend, is watching Nathan while Nate's going crazy.<p>

Rikki and I decided that she would be bringing Marie with her while she's out getting signatures, and I'll keep James with me. We'll stay at the café and talk to the people who decided to give it a shot. I hope that today works.

I look at my watch. Time to go.

****Ten minutes till noon****

****Ash's POV****

Along with working this benefit thing, I'm working my normal shift as well. Emma's sister, who'd rather be helping Melanie, is babysitting the girls. Bella and Nate are up on stage trying to get ready to entertain the people. In between songs, they will talk about Melanie as a person, and try to show that it should be okay to have her live among us.

I'm surprised that there's already a huge crowd of people. Some of which are reading the short article about Melanie, and how she ended up captured and about the rough life since she became one. The article even says that she knows how it happened, how she became one, but not specifics.

Some people have even signed the petition before it has even started. Which is quite surprising.

Suddenly, Bella's tapping the mike to get everyone's attention.

"Welcome everybody to this benefit about a close friend of ours. Her name is Melanie, but some of you may know her as the marine park's mermaid. She's not just a mermaid though, she's a friend, a girlfriend, a mother, a sister, and everything else that you and I are. So, we are going to play some music for you, and tell you about some things in her life during the breaks. Please give us a chance to prove that she's so much more than just a mermaid, and think about signing our petition. Thank you. Now let's get started," Bella says than whispers something to the back and start singing.

Behind her, a screen is setup, and shows pictures of Melanie throughout her life, and when it shows her holding Nathan after he was born, there were a ton of people that immediately wanted to sign the petition. Maybe this will work after all.

****Out and about****

****Three o'clock****

****Emma's POV****

Rikki, Maria and I have been going around all day trying to get signatures. Some people listened, but most just kept walking. Of the people that listened, only about 25% actually signed.

"Rikki, this isn't working," I say.

"Sure it is, some people have signed," she answers.

"Maybe, we should head back," I suggest.

"No, give me one more shot," she says.

"Why do you have an idea?"

"Maybe."

She then hands me Maria, and climbs up on a rock that we're standing by.

"Attention everyone, there are some things that you should know about the world we live in." She stops and waits as a crowd gathers.

We live in a world, where we are supposed to be free. Allowed to do everything and anything we want, which includes being different." She holds up a picture of Melanie and Nathan on his third birthday just a couple weeks earlier. "This girl, this woman, is different from us, but the same as us. She goes to school, she works, and she takes care of her son. She has friends, a boyfriend, and a family. So, what makes her different?"

She holds up a picture of Melanie as a mermaid. Some people gasp.

"This girl is a mermaid, but only when she touches water. She lived among us, causing us no harm, until the marine park captured her. They think she is nothing, but a creature. That she's not human, but she is. Do you agree?"

She pauses to wait to see if someone will answer.

No one does.

So, she takes action. "You, what do you define as human?"

The girl looks scared, "Ummmâ€¦. Something like me. You know, a person, who thinks, walks, talks, and I don't know. Just a person is human."

"Okay, what is a person?"

"Like you and me?" the girl answers questioningly.

"Right, which is exactly what Melanie is, just like you and me. Except that she has something more. An ability to swim with the dolphins and explore the ocean. She didn't ask for it, and she can't change it, and that's why you should join our petition, sign it and we could free her," Rikki finishes.

"I have one better," says a man in the crowd.

"One better?" Rikki asks.

"Let's bring the protest there. We can picket the front of the exhibit. Stop people from going in," he yells.

"Yes," the crowd yells.

Suddenly, the crowd is heading towards the marine park. I think this might be a problem.

"Rikki?" I ask.

"I'll call Zane and tell him what happened. We have to follow the crowd," she says.

"then let's go."

****At the cafÃ©****

****Zane's POV****

Almost everyone in the cafÃ© had signed the petition, but by now only a few people were left. Bella, Nate and Lewis were pacing up. When I got a call.

"How's it go?" I ask seeing as it's Rikki.

"Uh alright, I think a lit bigger fire then I can handle. Emma and I are going to the marine park, following a crowd that want to physically protest outside of the Melanie's tank," she answers.

"What? I'll be there soon," I say.

"I can handle itâ€¦"

"It doesn't matter, I coming."

****At the Marine park****

****Melanie's POV****

I was laying on my rock, pretending to be asleep, when suddenly I hear yelling. I open my eyes to see a lot more people then I'm used to seeing, and they look angry. Is it because I'm not entertaining?

I can't understand with all of the yelling that is going on, then one of the people who is holding a sign turns around, and I'm shocked.

It's my suitement at the college, and he sign says, "Free the mermaid."

Then the person she was arguing with turns around too, but their sign says, "Mermaids are creatures, not human."

The sign hurts me more than being locked up. It hurts even more when

I realize that she was one of my friends. How could I be friends with her now?

I move closer because I want to hear what's going on.

"She deserves to be free, and most of the people here feel that way. You've her friend, how could you do this to her?"

"I'm Melanie's friend, not that creature's."

"She's been lying to us."

"and obviously for a good reason."

I decide that I've heard enough, so I move on to everyone else fighting. I can see the other girls that are mermaids are here defending me, even Bella. They aren't clumped together though, and arguing with separate people. I can also see Nate and Nathan helping. I'm so happy that he has finally come around to my side of things. To really love me enough to fight for me.

Suddenly, the door to my tank's open area opens.

"Mermaid, we have to more you," the women says.

Yeah, like I'm going to respond to that.

She apperntly expects me to listen and come over to her, when I don't, I can see her get angry. I just smile at her.

Suddenly, I'm surprised to see her wave someone in. it's two guys and Sophie.

"Please Melanie, just come here. It'll make things easier. I don't want them to hurt you," Sophie says to me.

I look into her eyes, and see that she's being sincere. She truly doesn't want them to hurt me. I swim towards the land, hopefully this won't come back to haunt me.

****Rikki's POV****

When Zane made it to the marine park, he wasn't alone. Bella, Nate, Nathan, and Lizzie came with. Lizzie came to get Maria, and then go back to get James. Ash is still working, apparently at Cleo's insistence, Lewis doesn't know what's going on, Lizzie also took Catherine so that Cleo didn't have to worry about her, and Will is taking care of Ashley.

So, all of us came to the marine park to see what my little speech caused. When we got here, we could see the crowd was split in two. people for the mermaid being free, and the other side people who agree with the marine park. Immedately, we all split up, and start defending our side.

I got into a heated argument with some man about how he couldn't stand the thought of being with a mermaid, and how he couldntn stand the thought of being with a mermaid, and how if you had to hide it, obviously you shouldn't be here. I retailiated by saying that there are many different kinds of people in this country, why not look at

it as a different type of person and by okay with it.

He was about to answer when we could hear something through a bullhorn, but we couldn't indentify the words coming out and then suddenly the crowd is getting soaked. By the time I realized it, it was too late. I became a mermaid.

****A/N** sorry that it's late, but I hope you enjoyed. Let me what you like and what you don't like.******

****Chinaluv:** thank you for the reviews. And thank you for understanding, and who knows maybe they can get out of it.******

****Swimngym:** thanks for the review, and maybe the plan did work. Also I've never really considered OC's, but I guess I could consider it. What did you have in mind?******

****Zikki 3:** thanks for the review, and I'm glad this chapter made you smile, hopefully this one made you happy. ******

****Guest:** I'm glad that you like the boys POVs, thanks for the review.******

****H2oRikki:** I'm glad that it was interesting enough even though it was long, and I'm glad you like the suspense. Thank for the review.******

37. What's going on?

Chapter 35: What's going on?

****At the Marine Park****

****Cleo's POV****

When the water hit me, I didn't have enough time to run. Before I knew it, I was a mermaid surrounded by a bunch of people, and I could see the others on the floor, too. I then see Nate holding Nathan and running. Wow, Nate, way to leave us.

Suddenly, people are asking me questions. How is this possible? Is that why you are he marine park's mermaid in the dolphin show? When did this happen? Why didn't you tell people? And about ten thousand other questions.

Suddenly, I realize there is no way out of this. How are we supposed to get away from the crowds when we are nowhere water and are stuck as mermaids?

Then a police officer approaches me, and says, "We are going to get you out of here, don't fight. He's just going to take you through that door, away from the crowds."

"Okay."

****Zane's POV****

I see the girls getting approached by the police, and some men

picking them up and taking them towards a building. What are they going to do to them?

The couple police that aren't getting the girls out of here. One of them is shouting through a bullhorn that all protesters must leave or they will be arrested. I decide to approach him and ask where they are taking the girls.

"Sir, my fiancée was one of the mermaids that was just taken into that building over there, why was she taken?" I ask starting off polite, but ending up nowhere near it.

"We thought that they could dry often peace, away from all the questions and away from any idiots who might get them wet again," the officer explains.

"Alright, well, what's going to happen now?"

"We are going to take your petition to the town council and courts to get Melanie freed, and to protect any mermaids from getting harassed. We do request that you and anyone else who knew before now make statements about how you feel about them being mermaids and you're reaction to all of it," the officer says.

"Yes, of course, anything that will help, but how come no one ever said anything before! Melanie's been in that tank for almost a month," I say.

"She's not our citizen or at least we didn't know she was. The other girls, we've known since they were young, it wouldn't be fair to just let them be trapped."

"So just because you didn't know her, you didn't care?"

"I guess that came out wrong. Anyway, you need to leave. I'm sure they will come home soon enough. Goodbye," the officer says and leaves to help another officer.

I guess I need to go back to the café.

****Nate's POV****

As soon as the water hit me, I picked up Nathan and ran for it. I couldn't let him fall into the same trap as Melanie. It's just not fair. So, I left the others and ran.

I got back to my house safely. Barely anyone was on the streets, and those that were either didn't see or didn't care.

When I walked in, my mom was sitting on the couch watching the news, which ironically is about the protest at the marine park. It's replaying the water hitting the crowd and the girls and Nathan changing. You could see me running away and the journalist commenting on it. Then it finishes with the police making an announcement that no one is to hurt or harass the mermaids, and that a decision will be made at the town council meeting in regards to what can be done about Melanie and mermaids living amongst us in general.

My mom clicks off the t.v., "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Tell you what?" I ask.

"That you're dating that fish, and the boy in your arms is one, too."

"I couldn't tell you because I knew that you would react this way. I love Melanie and I love my son. They aren't fish to me," I say proudly.

"Your son?"

"Yes, when I was fifteen, I met Melanie, found out what she was, and used it against her. When she got pregnant, I ditched her, but she came back, and we are working things out. This boy is my son and you will not talk bad about him," I say.

Instead of answering, she gets up, walks over to Nathan and kneels in front of him.

"It's not your fault you're a fish. I'll love you as my grandson anyway," she says before giving him a hug.

"That's great, but Melanie is his mom, and I love her, you can't out cast her it's not fair," I say.

"Of course it is, she chose to be a mermaid," my mom says.

"No, she didn't."

"Then how did it happen?"

"Well, it all started with her dadâ€¦"

****At the Marine Park****

****Melanie's POV****

After I finally swam over to them, they helped me dry off and then forced me to walk with my hands tied behind my back for twenty minutes. We never left this building as far as I know, but I did end up in the place I first woke up in when Sophie captured me. I was untied and told to get in the pool.

I got in, and saw that Sophie was placed in a chair in the room with her arms tied. This caused me to raise questions, but I couldn't ask because of the owner being present.

"You'll be staying here until this "excitement" ends. Who knows you might end up with some new visitors," the owner says then laughs.

What could that mean?

She leaves with her men, leaving Sophie and I alone.

"What's going on? Why are you tied up?" I ask immediately.

"The girls and I tried to get a position going to free you, but it turned into a riot and I got caught by the owner. Next thing I knew I was unconscious. I wake up in a weird room, and she's telling me that

I have to help move you so that people won't break you out. I was afraid of what they might do to you, so I agreed."

"It's alright, but what are we going to do now?" I ask.

"I have no idea."

****At the boatshed  " hours later****

****Will's POV****

After the concert thing, and petition stuff, I took Ashley home with me. Bella just told me she had to do something and that she would be back for Ashley later since I had Ashley last night. I've been waiting a long time with nothing.

Maybe she forgot or is just busy. She'll be here soon. If something had happened, I would know right?

If the others knew something, I'm sure they'd tell me.

I haven't heard anything from Sophie either. I wonder why? She did say that she had something that she wanted to do.

Maybe I should try calling.

I dial Sophie first. It rings and rings, but no answer. So, I try Bella, straight to voicemail |.maybe something did go wrong.

It's time to call the other guys.

****At the McCartney's****

****Lewis's POV****

After the rally, I went home to take care of Catherine and began to wonder where Cleo could be. Just as I was starting to get worried, I get a phone call.

Will.

"Hi," I say as I answer.

"Hey Lewis, sorry to bother you, but you haven't heard anything from the girls have you?"

"No, and I was just starting to get worried about Cleo," I say.

"Well, I'm already worried, and I haven't heard anything so I thought that maybe you had?"

"No, nothing, but Zane might know," I say.

"You think?"

"Yeah, why don't we try to three-way him," I suggest.

"Sounds good."

****Ash's POV****

I went home after the café closed early. The rally thing seemed to go well, but I definitely needed to get the girls from Emma's sister. She was babysitting at our apartment, so it worked out well for us.

I went in, and called out to her.

"Jenna, I'm back."

"Hey, I was just changing them, but I thought Emma was supposed to be back earlier than you," she says questioningly.

"She was, she hasn't come home or called?"

"No, I saw the news though and I'm wondering if maybe that's the problem," she says.

"What do you mean? What was on the news?"

"You didn't know that there was a riot at the marine park?"

"A riot?"

"Yes, the girls and people who were both with and against them were there arguing their side and protesting which side they were on. The police had to hose down the crowd," Jenna says.

"Hose? Like sprayed water on them?"

"Yes."

"And you say the girls were in the crowd?"

"Yes."

"Then that's what happened. Then got wet in front of people, obviously that caused problems. Come on, we need to get going," I say.

"Where are we going?"

"The café, I just know that Zane's involved in this."

****At the café****

****Zane's POV****

It's been hours since the problems at the marine park, and I went home to get my kids. When I got there Lizzie said that she had seen the news and thought that the girls might go to the café instead of their homes since some reporters were going to ask them questions.

I saw that as a possibility, so we went there.

Since we were closed, I was surprised to see Ash and Jenna sitting outside the café.

"What's going on, guys?"

"We thought you could tell us," Ash says.

"Tell you what?" I ask.

"What happened at the marine park? We saw you on the news," Ash says.

"Let's go inside. I'll explain everything, but maybe we should get the other guys to come over too," I say.

"why? Are they in trouble?"

"When I left, it didn't seem like it, but I haven't heard from Rikki, and Lizzie thought that maybe they came here," I say.

"Then open the door, maybe we are worried for nothing," Jenna says.

I turn to the door, and unlock it. As it swings open, we all hold our breath and enter.

I turn on the lights. Nothing. No one is here. Lizzie goes in the office, and opens the door.

"They aren't here," she yells.

"Then I guess I better call the other guys. They need to know that something could have happened to them," I say.

Just as I finish my phone lights up. Will.

"Hello," I say as I answer.

"Zane?"

"Yes, it's Zane."

"Lewis is on the phone, too. We are worried about the girls, we haven't heard from them, and we don't know what's going on. Do you know anything?"

"Uhhhâ€¦well I haven't heard from them either, but you can come to the cafÃ©, and I'll tell you what happened at the marine park," I say.

"Alright. We'll be there," both of them say together before hanging up.

****Ash's POV****

I was really impatient to hear what Zane had to say. The wait for the other guys never seemed to end. I feel like they are taking their time. Finally, they got here.

They came in and sat down, and then looked at Zane to start. I followed them and turned to look at Zane.

"Alright, well, Rikki accidentally got people all riled up, and they decided to protest at the marine park," he pauses.

Being impatient by now, I say , "We know that. What happened to the girls?"

"I'm getting to that, give me a chance," Zane says looking angry.

"Just continue," Lewis says.

"Well, it turned into a fight between those who think mermaids should be treated as creatures and those who think they should be treated as humans," Zane says.

"And?" Will asks.

"It got out of hand. The police arrived and were shouting through a bullhorn for everyone to stop or they were going to spray down the crowd. Nobody could hear though, so the fighting continued," Zane says.

"And the police sprayed the crowd?" Lewis asks.

"Yes," Zane says.

"That can't be it, what happened?" I ask.

"The girls had nowhere to run. So, they turned in front of everyone."

"And?" Will asks.

"The owner had some guys take them into the building behind the police to dry off. The police made everyone leave. I went up to a police officer to make sure the girls were okay, and he told me that the owner was going to let them dry off and go out through the back. That way they could avoid all the people," Zane says.

"So, what are we going to do now?" I ask.

"Well, we find the girls, but a police officer is coming here tomorrow to talk to us," Zane says.

"About what?" Lewis asks.

"They are taking this situation to the town council and court. They want us to make statements about how we feel about it, and how things have changed. The goal is to make it seem like nothing is going to change if they just allow them to live normally. That this isn't as big as everyone is making it out to be," Zane says.

"But it is big. Especially for all of us," I say.

"I know, but we have to be convincing. We don't know what we might do if they don't side with us," Zane says.

"This is true, so what do we do about the girls?" I ask.

"I think that we should just wait at home for them. Maybe they are just waiting for things to calm down. So, we should go home and wait for them to show up. If they haven't by tomorrow morning then when

the police get here for interviews, we will say something," Zane says.

"Alright, but nothing better have happened to them," I say.

"Trust me, I don't want anything to happen to them either," Zane says.

So, we get ready to go home. I just hope that they are safe wherever they are.

****Melanie's POV****

Sophie and I have been contemplating what we should do about this situation and what the owner could possibly mean when she said that we could end up with visitors.

"Who could those visitors be?" I ask.

"I don't know."

"She wouldn't hurt Nate or Nathan, would she?"

"Probably not," Sophie says.

"Then who?" I ask.

Just then the door opens and some men come in. Each of them holding a different mermaid.

I can't see their faces, but each of their tails are different colors.

"You know, as much as I expected it, it truly is surprising to see them as mermaids. I mean will told me that they were, but actually seeing it, is a totally different story," Sophie says.

Then I realize who these mermaids are. Cleo, Emma, Rikki, and Bella. Oh no.

****A/N hey guys, I'm sorry this chapter was lame, and even more sorry that I only just started chapter 36. So, it'll be awhile before I can upload it. I'm not sure how long, but hopefully not much later after next Friday. ****

****I hope you enjoyed this chapter, and please read and review.****

****Guest- thanks, I will be continuing, and I hope to have finished this soon. I have it planned to chapter 45.****

****Zikki 3- thanks, and I wonder what is going to happen to them? ****

****H2ORikki- Sorry for the cliffhanger, but I'm glad you liked it. Thanks again****

****Swimngym- thanks for offering to help me with OC's if you ever feel that you want to contribute without asking, I like your ideas. Thanks for everything!****

****Thanks for everything guys and girls, sorry it'll be awhile for the next update, but unless anything major happens the last chapter will be chapter 45. Something to look forward to. ****

38. Trapped

Chapter 36: Trapped

****At the marine park****

****Bella's POV****

Why do I feel like I'm in so much pain? Why is my bed hard? Am I even on my bed? Reaching out with my eyes still closed, all I can feel is the hard ground and water. Which means that I must be in mermaid form. Oh god, what happened to me?

I decide that maybe it's time to open my eyes. Although I'm slightly afraid. Slowly, I open one eye, and see a white tail next to me. As I open the other eye, the mermaid comes into view, and it's Melanie. Uh oh. This can't be good.

I lift my head and turn it to the other side. I see that Rikki lays next to me, waking up slightly, and the other two are still passed out from whatever drug that stupid woman gave us.

The last thing I remember before I was drugged, was getting wet at the stupid protest for a person that I could care less about. Then of course I turn into a mermaid and some men take me into some building to apparently dry off.

I actually believed that we would be fine, but no, as soon as we got through the door. Some woman, who I heard names is Johanna, stuck me with some kind of drug. Looks like it's been a while and I never dried off.

Rikki, next to me, is slowly waking up and is lifting her head to look around.

"What happened to us?" she asks in a whisper.

"We've been drugged by some woman names Johanna," I answer.

"But why?"

"Because you're mermaids," Sophie says.

We both jump, and look over to where her voice came from.

"Seriously, what's going on?" Rikki asks.

"We're in the tank that I was brought to when I was captured," Melanie says.

"That's great, but it doesn't explain anything," I say.

"We were protesting when I got pulled away during the protest by

Johanna, and the next thing I knew I was being tied to this chair. Then she told that she planned to capture any and all mermaids, and then prove that you should be treated like creatures. She left me alone for a while before coming back and bringing me to Melanie's door, and had me wait outside. since Melanie wouldn't come to the land part for Johanna, and I'm the only one she'd trust. So, she used me to Melanie out before throwing us in here. Making sure Melanie was stuck as a mermaid, and I was stuck to this chair. You girls just got thrown in here about three hours ago. You were unconscious," Sophie says.

"What is she going o do to us in the meantime?" Rikki asks.

"I don't know, I'm surprised she's letting us all be in the same tank," Melanie says.

"Don't say that she might hear you," I say.

"She can't hear you," Sophie says.

"And how would you know?" Rikki asks.

"Because she told me. I was working with her at one point," Sophie replies.

"Right, which is probably why we are all here," I say glaring at her.

"Not exactly," says another voice.

The four of us look up to see a woman, who is most likely the owner.

"If it's not her fault , who's is it?" Rikki asks.

"Yours, all of the mermaids. You shouldn't be here, you shouldn't even exist. If you weren't here then none of this could have happened," the woman says.

"So, we are just supposed to hide? Leave our families just because you think that?" Rikki asks.

"No, I'm jjust saying it's not her fault. Anyways, I have some plans for you, but first you need to be separated." Three men came in, ad se pointed at me, Melanie, and the still sleeping Emma, "Take them to the new tank."

I tried to struggle to get away, but it was no use.

****At the cafÃ©****

****Lewis' POV****

When I woke up to no Cleo, I immediately got Catherine ready and headed to the cafÃ©. Ash was serving people, and Zane was behind the counter. I could see Jenna and Lizzie looking after the kids.

I walk up to the counter.

"Zane, do you have a minute?" I ask.

"Yes," he answers and I follow him to a booth.

Before I can begin, he says, "the girls didn't come home. The police are in the office talking to Will. Ash and I have already talked to them, and they'll want to talk to you, too."

"Alright, I will. Are you worried?"

"You couldn't even imagine."

Just then the office door opens, and Will waves me over. I get up, and take Catherine with me.

"Wait," Zane says, "Jenna and Lizzie offered to watch the kids for us."

"Really? Are you sure?"

"Yes, we are sure, it's okay," Lizzie says.

"Thanks," I say handing her Catherine and then going to the office.

I walk in without knocking since they expect me.

"Ah Mr. McCartney, thsnks for talking to us. This interview will be recorded, the court and town council want to see and hear that you are telling the truth. are you alright with that?"

"I'd do anything to get my wife back, I have no problem admitting how much I love her," I say.

"Even though she's a mermaid?"

"Absolutely, being a mermaid is a special thing, but it's not all she is. The fact that she's a mermaid doesn't bother me at all," I say.

"Not even a little"

"No."

"When did you find out?"

"Not long after it happened. I want to say about a week."

"Wow, did she tell you or was it on accident?"

"She wanted to tell me, but the other girls were right to want to keep it a secret. I ended up finding out by accident."

"What was your reaction."

"I was shocked. I didn't exactly believe in mermaids."

"And after that? Were you repulsed? Has it affected your relationships?"

"Not at all. I am in love with Cleo, and it didn't matter that she

was different. In fact, I really loved and enjoyed it. We could do stuff that other people couldn't. it's like an adventure everyday. But truly, she's no different than anyone else," I say.

"So, she shouldn't be treated differently?"

"No."

"Okay, thank you. You may leave."

I get up and go to Jenna and Lizzie right away. Zane and Ash were standing by their table.

"Hi guys," I say as I approach.

"Hey, so the cops dispatched someone to go check out the marine park, but Will thinks if they are there the owner will find a way to hide them. So, we are going to try to investigate ourselves," Ash says.

"How?" I ask.

"These two are going to babysit, and we are going to take a look around, and help them figure things out," Zane says.

"That explained nothing," I say.

"Just come on," Zane says.

****At the marine parl****

****Emma's POV****

I wake up to water splashing n my face.

"What's going on?" I ask.

"The owner of the marine park has captured us," Bella says.

I look around, I see her and Melanie.

"Just us?"

"No, we were just taken to a different tank," Melanie says.

"Why?" I ask.

"Because she didn't want us to talk and find a way out. Eventually we are all going to be in separate tanks," Melanie says.

"How do you know that?" Bella asks suspicious.

"She's not stupid for one, and for two she told us that we were going to be put in separate tanks. Keeping any number of us together will eventually lead us to a way out," Melanie says.

They start arguing and I have to break it up.

"Melanie's right,, she could split us up any minute. We have to come up with a plan," I say.

****Rikki's POV****

The owner stayed to tell us that she knew we were mermaids, how she's been planning a way to get us all to be trapped, and how she plans to have a mermaid for every day of the week to be in her stupid dolphin shows. When I asked who the other two mermaids were going to be, she simply looked at Sophie, still in the chair, and then says, "That's a surprise."

After she left, Sophie and I talked about what that could mean. Even though I can't really stand her, we are in this together and figuring this out is more important than anything else right now.

"I still can't figure out why she looked at me," Sophie says.

"I don't know, unless you suddenly became a mermaid," I say.

"If I was, don't you think I'd be in the water with you," she says.

"Most likely, besides you couldn't have changed into one since you captured Melanie and you wouldn't have captured her if you were one," I say muttering to myself.

"What makes you say that?" Sophie asks making me realize she heard me.

"Ummmâ€¦. I just know."

"Rikki, tell me. This could be important. What if she plans to turn me into one," Sophie says fearfully.

"No she can't, it's not timeâ€¦" I say trailing off.

"Yes, it is. Tonight's a full moon," Cleo says surprising us.

"You're awake. Are you okay? You were out a lot longer than I was," I say.

"I'm fine," she answers.

"Good. now what does a full moon have to do with this?" Sophie asks.

"The full moon turned us into mermaids," Cleo answers her.

"The full moon?" she asks skeptically.

"Yes," says a voice.

We all turn to the door, it's the owner. None of us say anything.

A man comes in and unties Sophie, who looks scared.

"I need seven mermaids. You're going to be the sixth," the owner says.

"And who's going to be the seventh?" I ask worried for the other

mermaids I know.

"You're favorite 'Ultimate super' mermaid, " she says with a smile.

Cleo and I look at each other.

"Yes, her. She can spend her jail time in a tank. It's just like a different type of jail," she says before following the man holding Sophie out of the door.

"I think this just got way worse," I say.

****At the jail****

****Charlotte's POV****

I was sitting in the cel I shared with Dr. Denman, when a guard came up to the door.

"Charlotte Watsford, you are being relased to do your time elsewhere. Gather your things and come with me," the guard said.

I just stood there for a second before looking at Dr. Denman, she was nodding at me. So, I gather my stuff, and follow him down the hall. We walk for a few minutes before we turn and enter a room.

A woman is sitting there with paperwork in front of her, and looking at the door. She smiles when she sees me. The guard motions for me to sit across from her.

"Ah, miss Watsford, nice to meet you," she says,

"Who are you?" I ask because I can't help myself.

"Oh, excuse me, I am Johanna Young, owner of the Gold Coast's marine park," Johanna says.

"Okay so why are you here?"

"I'm here because I have a proposition for you. I know that you used to be a mermaid, and I also know why you are here, I want you to change back into a mermaid, and preform in my dolphin shows as a mermaid, and live in a tank when you are not performing for the rest of you sentence," she tells me.

Being a mermaid as part of my sentence would be great. I loved being a mermaid, but performing and being in a tank? Well, it is better than sitting in a cell. But then no one's supposed to know about mermaids.

"I see you are conflicted. Would it help if I told you that people already know about mermaids, o that you wouldn't be the only one," she says.

Not the only one. People know. Sounds like the other girls got themselves in trouble.

"Alright, I'll do it," I say.

"So, you know how to become a mermaid then?"

"Yes, I do."

"Alright, then sign these, and we will be on the way to turn you back into a mermaid," she says.

"Let's go."

****Zane's POV****

Ash and I were teamed up on one side of the building that I saw the girls get taken into. We saw the police know on the door and ask about the girls. The woman that answered said that they left about an hour after their mishap claiming that it took that long to dry off.

Ash and I looked at each other. Obviously she's lying because Rikki would never sit in her tail that long to dry off when she has the power to do it in less than a minute. That means that she must still have them.

The cops took a second to observe her and then they nod and left.

That's all they are going to do? They aren't going to search the premises or something? The girls are in serious trouble, and yet the police don't even care.

"What are we going to do?" Ash asks.

"We are going to sneak in and find them," I say.

"Let's do this."

****At the moon pool****

****Sophie's POV****

Johanna and her men untied me, and we had walked down to her boat, where they sat me in a room with no windows and locked the door. Nothing happened for a long time after that, but before I know it the boat was moving.

I had a feeling that we would be going out to Mako as that's where I found Melanie. Since Johanna told us about her plan, I've been totally freaked out.

I don't want to become a mermaid. I don't want to be one of them. Even though I've come to terms with mermaids being around and that they are human, too, but this is just scary. This isn't what I wanted. I never want this. What am I going to do with a tail?

I kept trying to figure out what was going to happen to me after this happens. I got so lost in my train of thought, I completely missed the fact that Charlotte was here, and that we were already at the pool I found and trapped Melanie at.

Charlotte and I are made to stand at the edge of the pool. She looks content, and almost excited.

"How can you be happy about this?" I ask her.

"Because it's a wonderful thing being a mermaid. It's truly amazing, you'll love it," she responds.

Before I get the chance to respond about my fears of this whole situation, Johanna says, "Now, jump." And we do.

****At the cafÃ©****

****No POV****

Jenna and Lizzie were still sitting there, and taking care of the children.

"There has to be a way to get to them," Jenna says.

"Yes, but how? Obviously they don't have their phones and we can't exactly call the marine park and ask for them," Lizzie say.

"No, but what about a magical method to get in touch with them," Jenna says.

"A magical method?"

"Yes, exactly."

"Yes, exactly."

"Yes, exactly."

"Which would be?"

"Our minds, remember? We can communicate with our twins through our minds," Jenna says.

"That's it," Lizzie says. "We've found a way."

****A/N here you go, sorry for any mistakes and sorry it took so long. But I did warn you about the fact that I wasn't prepared for it, and I'm still behind. I hope to have chapter 37up after Easter, maybe like the Tuesday or Wednesday after. So enjoy and read and review. Thanks****

****Swimngym- maybe the police officers are nice, or at least trying. Also I have decided to that I will right "Five year Later" but I'm not going to make it the third follow up stories. I want it to stand alone in way. A contuation, but you won't have to read the others to understand it. But I have to finish this story first. Anyways, tell me what you think of this chapter and thanks for the review.****

****H20 Rikki- I'm glad it explained it, and thanks**** hope you enjoyed this one.****

****Zikki3- thanks, and I'm glad that the Nate thing was sweet. Thanks again and I hope this is just as good, tell me what you think. ****

****Kass- glad you liked it, thanks****

****Chinaluv- thanks****

39. The Powers

Chapter 37: The Powers

****At the marine park****

****Rikki's POV****

When the owner finally came back with Sophie, she wasn't the only new mermaid. The owner had her men throw Sophie and Charlotte in the pool so that they would change. I could see the fear on Sophie's face as she started to change. Charlotte, on the other hand, looked like she was in heaven. I'm wondering how the owner managed to get her out of jail? I mean she still has about four and a half years left.

"I let you guys meet each other, I'll be back later to separate you all," she says and leaves with her men.

Silence for ten minutes before Charlotte finally says something.

"Looks like I'm meant to be a mermaid after all."

Cleo and I exchange looks while Sophie says, "That's great, now how do I get rid of this."

"You can't ," I say because I don't want to get into the special moons and such.

"This is a disaster, I don't want to be a fish," Sophie says.

"You're not a fish, you're a mermaid, embrace it," Charlotte says.

Then I hear something strange.

"Rikki, can you hear me?"

"Yes, I can hear you, which one of you said that?" I ask looking around.

"No one has said anything," Cleo says looking concerned.

"Rikki, send me a thought."

"How can I send you a thought," I say aloud.

"No one asked you to send them a thought," Cleo responds.

"Rikki, it's Lizzie, your twin. Please respond we can communicate telepathically."

"Oh," I say out loud. Then I change directions and think, "Lizzie, you there?"

"Yes! We finally got through."

"We?"

"Yes, Jenna and I. she's been trying to get in touch with Emma. is she with you?"

"No, her, Bella and Melanie have been taken to a different tank."

"So, you're still at the marine park?"

"Yes, we never left."

"Alright, who's with you?"

"Sophie, Cleo, and Charlotteâ€¦it's a long story."

"Do you know where in the marine park you are?"

"Sophie said something about the tank Melanie was originally in."

"Hmmmâ€¦I'll call Zane and give him that info, okay? Hold on, we'll figure something out."

I guess we'll just have to wait a while.

****Zane's POV****

Ash and I had been trying to find a way into the building, but it has pass codes protecting it. We tried to figure out who might know the pass codes, but we could only come up with Cleo, who's most definitely in there locked up, and Sophie, who we think is in there do to the fact that she isn't answering and no one can find her.

"I think we are forgetting someone," Ash says.

"Who?"

"Just someone who knows, and has been dealing with this, too," Ash says.

"Who would that be?"

Suddenly, my phone starts ringing very loud. Good thing we weren't sneaking around in the building.

"Zane speaking."

"Zane, it's Lizzie, I talked to Rikki. She says that she, Cleo, Sophie, and Charlotte are in the tank Melanie was first in. the others got moved to a different tank. Jenna's working on getting in touch with them."

"How did you get in touch with them? And Melanie's old tank? How are we supposed to know where that is?"

"Telepathically."

Before she can go on, Ash begins to tap my arm. I look at him and he mouths 'Nate'. That's it! He's the one that could know the codes.

"Thanks get in touch with Emma, we'll work on breaking out who we can right now."

Then I hang up. We need to get in touch with Nate.

****Cleo's POV****

Rikki just finished explaining that her sister could talk to her through their minds when suddenly she made the face again. Like she was concentrating on the thoughts in her head. Lizzie must be contacting her again. I was really worried about her when she was first experiencing this, but now I'm happy for her. We probably found a way out.

"Alright, that was Lizzie. She told me that if we dry off, our powers will come back and have some new neat powers as the queen. The guys are working on helping us, but we have to try to help ourselves. So, let's dry off," she says.

We all pull ourselves onto the land as far away from the water as we can. I'm surprised that Rikki is offering to help Charlotte and Sophie after everything they've done, but I suppose that we are all in this together.

Sophie ends up needing help to get on land since she's not used to having a tail yet. So, Rikki and I help her.

"Thanks," she says quietly.

"How long do you think it'll be before we dry off?" I ask.

"Hopefully not long. I don't think we have a lot of time," Rikki answers.

****Emma's POV****

I was trying to sleep when I started hearing a voice. At first I thought it was Bella and Melanie, but when neither of them had said anything. So, I tried to go back to sleep. Then the voice came back.

"Emma, Emma, Emma! Answer me."

"No, I won't answer to strange voices," I think.

"It's not just some strange voice, it's me, Jenna."

"Jenna?"

"Yes, I can talk to you telepathically."

"You can?"

"Yes, now listen. We have to get you out of there. Do you have any idea when tank you're in? or a general direction from the first

tank?"

"No, I was still knocked out."

"Okay well ask one of the others, maybe they know."

"Okay."

Then I say to Bella, and Melanie, "Guys, do you have any idea where we are? Or how far we are from the first tank?"

"It was like a ten minute walk, but it might have been because we are heavy," Bella says.

"And we didn't use any stairs or elevators," Melanie adds.

"Anything else?" I ask.

"I can't remember anything else sorry," they both say.

So, I focus on telling Jenna those things. She responds by telling me that they will believe as soon as they can, and tht we should try to get ourselves dry.

I thank her before turning to Melanie and Bella. "We need to get ourselves dry."

"Alright, let's pull ourselves up," Bella says.

"We'll be out of here soon," I tell Melanie who looks sad.

"I know."

****Rikki's POV****

Drying off like this takes so long. I wish we weren't captives because then I'd be able to make this go faster. I keep trying to use my power anyway, just in case. Time to try again.

I clench my hand just like I'm used to, and suddenly I can feel the warmth in my tail. My power is coming back. I must be close to drying off. Now that my power is almost back, I can speed up the process. So, I do.

Two minutes later, I'm dry and walk over to Cleo and dry her. Then I proceed to the other two. Charlotte thanks me, and looks unfazed when I do it to her, but Sophie looks down right terrified.

"It's okay, I'm not going to hurt you," I say.

"Okay," she says still looking scared.

I have her dried off, thirty seconds later, she's got her legs again. She looks relieved.

"Come on, you guys need to touch me for his power to work," I say.

"Directly?" Cleo asks.

"I don't think so. Cleo, grab my shoulder, good, now Sophie grab hers, and Charlotte grab Sophie's. alright, now I'll try." I focus on becoming invisible. Once I feel like I've succeeded, I look around, and since I can't see myself or the others, I say, "We did it, now come on."

As part of this power, we could also walk through walls, so I don't bother opening the door. I stop to look at which direction we should go, Sophie says, "Go left, it'll bring us towards other tanks."

So, I head that way. We make our way pretty fast when suddenly I stop. I can hear voices. I head towards a door, and try to place my ear up next to it, unfortunately, I forgot that I would go right through it. The four of us fall right through the door.

****Bella's POV****

At Emma's suggestion, we pulled ourselves up on the land to dry off. Emma decided to try to cheer Melanie up, but I didn't want anything to do with it, so I just watched the door. We needed to be careful if someone from the marine park came in here. We'd have to pretend like we never left the water.

As I was watching the door, something weird happened to it. There was this shimmer that seemed to go through the middle of it. Then as I'm about to turn around to left Emma and Melanie, the shimmer fades, and in its place are four girls.

"Rikki!" Cleo yells.

"Did you even think about us when you did that?" Charlotte asks.

"No, I heard voices, and it could be the others," Rikki says.

"Rikki! Cleo!" I yell interrupting them.

"And it is! I was right," Rikki says happily.

She runs over to me, and dries me off before proceeding to Emma then Melanie.

"Before we leave, we need a plan. We have no idea where we are and where the door is. Does any body here have any idea how to get out of here?" Rikki asks.

"I do. I've visited Melanie's tank many times, I can get us out of here," Sophie says.

"Alright, then you lead the way," Emma says.

"But we all have to be touching or they power won't work," Rikki says.

"Alright, let's line up then," I say.

And we do. Sophie first, then Rikki, Cleo, Emma, me, Melanie and Charlotte although I'm seriously wondering about her. How did she come into the picture?

"Is everyone ready?" Rikki asks.

We all nod. "Then let's go."

****Lewis' POV****

Will and I have been all over try to figure out how to find the girls. Nothing seems to have been accomplished. We haven't heard anything from anyone, and we have no idea what's going on anymore.

"Maybe we should try calling again," Will says.

"They really haven't been answering," I say.

"It doesn't hurt to try."

"Maybe it does."

"Come on."

"No Will, they'll call when they know something," I say.

"What if they were so preoccupied that they forgot to call," Will says.

"The girls will remind them."

"Seriously, let's just call them."

"No," I say then stop walking. Will, who had kept walking, stops and then turns around.

"What's wrong?"

"Turn around. Do you see that shimmer of light moving?"

"Yah, what do you think it is?"

"I don't know, but let's find out," I say then we start to walk towards this shimmer that's really long. Then I notice Zane and Ash running towards the shimmer as well.

Then all of a sudden the shimmer is gone, and the girls replace the shimmer.

"Cleo!" I yell as I see her, and Will does the same.

She and Bella turn at the sound of our voices, and begin to run towards us. Before I know it, she's in my arms again, and I couldn't be happier.

After a few minutes, we realized that the owner could come and get them. So, we walked over to the others to figure out what to do.

Zane and Rikki were talking about possibilities, when we walk up.

"So, what's the plan?" I ask.

"I think we should swim our way out," Rikki says.

"Why can't we just walk through the gates?" Sophie asks.

"because she could've told her workers not to let s leave," Rikki replies.

"but we can't swim either, there are gates," Sophie points out.

"That have switched to open them," I say. "Like the one you and Emma came through that let Ronnie out."

"Exactly, or the one that Cleo swam through when she got wet during Kim and Eliot's date here," Emma says.

"Then it's decided. Let's go," Rikki says.

"But where are you going to go?" I ask.

"To dry off, and then the police station. She can't get away with this," Rikki says.

"Okay, we'll come with you," I say looking around at the other guys.

They all nod in agreement.

Rikki turns to Zane. "I think we have to do this by ourselves. Go home. Get the twins and take care of them. I will be home soon."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, please go," she says. He nods, kisses her, and leaves.

I see Ash and Will look at Emma and Bella respectively. I look at Cleo. She's nodding at me in a way that shows me it's okay o leave.

"I will after I see you through the gate, okay?"

"Okay," she says.

The other two both say goodbye, and the eight of us move to where the gate was that Rikki and Emma got through a couple years ago.

I open it, and they all dive in the pool. I watch them glide through the gate before putting it back up, and leaving the marine park.

****Emma's POV****

All of us swam through without a problem. The owner must not know that we got out. I guess we really got lucky that Rikki had those powers, and that our sisters can communicate with us.

The things that we have learned recently really surprised me. It's so

different than what we thought when this first happened to us. I wish we had known some of this stuff before. Maybe we would have been better off.

Suddenly, I notice that the others are ascending. It appears that everyone has followed Rikki to our secret spot to dry off. She appears to be the leader. She takes turns drying each of us off until finally I'm the last one dried off.

She doesn't hesitate to head straight for the police station. She says nothing to the rest of us, but it's obvious that she expects us to follow her. We all walk there without out hesitation, but once we get there some of us are hesitant.

I was about to follow Melanie in, when I noticed that Charlotte and Sophie are hanging back.

"What's wrong, girls?" I ask.

"I don't want to be a mermaid, and I don't want anybody else to know. I'm embarrassed that I got into this situation. I could've stayed out of it. I don't deserve help after all I've done," Sophie says.

"It's okay. You'll be fine, and Cleo didn't want to be one either, but she loves it now. You'll get used to it, but you have to talk to the police it's the right thing to do," I tell her.

"Alright, thanks Emma," Sophie says before heading inside.

I look to Charlotte.

"I don't know what to say," she says.

"Start with how you are feeling."

"I felt great. I got to serve my time as a mermaid. A dream come true for me."

"But?"

"That's over now, isn't it? Now I'm going back to jail as a mermaid."

"You know that you deserved that jail time," I say.

"But I've learned my lesson. And the length of time was a bit ridiculous. And how am I supposed to be in there as a mermaid. The other women aren't in there for something so ridiculous, they are in there for horrible crimes."

"then maybe the girls and I can talk about possibly getting your sentence reduced, but we have to talk about it, and you have to help us put the owner behind bars," I say.

"Okay."

**a/n I'm sorry it's been a while but I did warn you. Anyways, I hope to write and finish the next chapter for you guys as soon as possible, possibly this weekend, but most likely after the weekend like the same time this week. **

****By the way, I never intended to have Charlotte or Sophie turn into mermaids, and this might change my outline for the rest of the story. ****

****Zikki3- thanks, and hopefully things work out. ****

****Chinaluv- no experiments, and thanks for loving my story****

****H20lover- they got out**** thanks for the review.****

****JaseSonOfAthena- I haven't really addressed Melanie's powerâ€|huh I guess I should figure it out. Thanks for the review and I like the name Melina. Even if you mixed it up with Melanie. ****

****H20Rikki- yup it was totally unplanned to have them be mermaids, thanks for the review.****

****Thanks to everyone who reads, reviews, and follows. And if I missed anyone I'm sorry. ****

40. Freedom and Exposed for good

Chapter 38: Freedom and exposed for good

****At the police station****

****Cleo's POV****

I was relieved when the police said they wanted to talk to us all together then separately. We already did the group interview, and now I'm waiting for my separate interview. We aren't supposed to talk so they put us in a waiting room with two officers that are there to make us not talk.

After our separate interview, they told us that we could go, but Rikki said that we shouldn't go too far. That we need to get together and discuss that fact that we are out, and don't know what the people have decided.

But she was overruled. We are all tired, and told her that it'll be late when we are going to be done so we need sleep. So, she went first, and then left after Bella came out and repeated that she wasn't going to stay. So, no meeting after we talk to the police officer.

I'm supposed to go after Emma, and she went in after Bella so hopefully soon it'll be my turn. I feel like I've been waiting forever.

I was beginning to fall asleep when suddenly Emma's tapping me to wake me up.

"Thanks," I say. Then get up and go in the interview room.

"Ah, Mrs. McCartney, please have a seat."

"Thank you, and call me Cleo."

"Okay Cleo, tell us what happened."

"Um, basically, there was a protest at the marine park, the people wanted Melanie released. She's our friend, so we wanted to help. But we got wet, and the owner intervened. She had her men take us into that building and she knocked us out with some drug," I say.

"Then what happened?"

"I woke up in a tank with Rikki and Sophie. They explained that the owner had come in and taken the others to a different tank because she didn't want us scheming to get out. So then after they filled me in, the owner comes back, and takes Sophie with the intention of turning her into one. She mentioned Charlotte becoming one too in an obscure way. Calling her the super mermaid. It's hard to explain, but she once called herself that. The next time we saw them, they were mermaids, and the owner, Miss Young, said she would come back to separate us," I say.

"Did she come back?"

"I don't know."

"what do you mean, you don't know?"

"Well, we found a way out before she came back," I say.

"And how did you do that?"

"It's hard to explain, mermaids have powers, and Rikki has the most powers. She made it so that we could all walk through walls, and were invisible. We found the others, and made our way out," I say.

"Is Rikki the only one with those powers?"

"Yes."

"Do you think that she might be dangerous?"

"No, of course not. How could she be dangerous?" I say.

"She could have powers no one knows about. Powers that she could use to kill people she doesn't like," the officer says.

"If that were true, the owner, Charlotte, and Sophie would be dead," I say.

"Okay, then. So, you wouldn't say that mermaids are dangerous?"

"Of course not. Just because we have tails when we're wet, and can swim with the dolphins doesn't make us dangerous. We are just like everyone else," I say.

"okay, one last question. What do you think we should do with Miss Watsford?"

"What do you mean?"

"She was in jail for what she did to you girls, then the owner changed her sentence so that she would serve her time as a mermaid for the marine park. Should she go back to jail or should she be set free?"

I think about it for a minute. "Honestly, I don't know, maybe I should talk to the other girls who were affected by what she did," I say.

"Alright, we will hold her here until tomorrow at five. That's when the council will decide on this whole mermaids thing."

"Okay."

"Thanks, you may go."

I shake his hand, and get up to leave. I'm ready to go back home and see my husband and baby. I look at Charlotte as I leave "Should I feel like maybe she should be let go?"

****The next morning****

****The soon-to-be Bennett's****

****Rikki's POV****

It was so nice to wake up in my own bed, to me kids' crying for me. It might sound weird, but it was nice to know that they were okay by hearing them cry.

So, I get out of bed to comfort them, and fix whatever was wrong. As I'm rocking Maria, Zane comes in, and smiles. He picks up James, and sits in the rocking chair next to me.

"We really missed you, I was so worried even if it was just a day," he says.

"I know, me too. I'm thankful that Lizzie and Jenna knew what to do, but to tell you the truth, I might not be up for this whole mermaid queen thing," I say.

"Well, you're only just getting used to it," Zane replies.

"I know. Speaking of, I need to go talk to sir king of mermen. I was supposed to talk to him when Nate came up with this big plan," I say.

"Then go, we'll be here waiting," he says.

"Thanks, I'll be back soon."

It didn't take me long to get to Mako where I'd be meeting the king. I swam in and sat on the ledge while I waited for him to show up.

I was thinking of leaving, when he finally swam in.

He looked like he should be old, but yet young. Kinda like the type of person who's had a face lift or something, but I really shouldn't make judgements on this. He pulls himself to the side and prepares

himself to speak.

"Hello, I am King Jason, king of mermen," he says.

He's so proper. I must mock him.

"Hello, I am Rikki Chadwick, Queen of mermaids."

"Don't mock me. A king should be proper, but you don't need to be."

"Why not?"

"Queen's don't stay very long. Unlike king's who are born and die as a king," he says.

"So, you've been a ruler since the day you were born?"

"Essentially, yes. Since I was born, my father taught me to be a king, when he died, I took over. In your land queens can change every year if they wanted, too. The only reason there's a Queen is because my great-grandfather didn't want us to mix with you," he says.

"Queen's can change every year? And why? We are all merpeople."

"You aren't like us. You're made, not born. At least most of you aren't. You could always choose to go back and forth between the land world and the sea world, we can't. Mermen who were born that way about water are rare and can do both, but other mermen can't. It is dangerous for mermen and mermaids to mingle too much that's why it's only once a year that we get together to create more life. And yes Queens often can't handle things, especially ones that haven't been mermaids all their lives or live up here."

"So basically, I'm not going to last long, and we might give your men a bad influence."

"Yes. So, I came to tell you that the day has come. In two weeks your Queendom will be full of mermaids and mermen mingling. You need to prepare for it. Also, I wanted to wish you luck on being the queen. Good luck," he says then swims off.

Well, that was disappointing. Guess it's time to talk to the girls.

****At Emma and Ash's Apartment****

****Emma's POV****

Cleo called this morning and said that we all need to get together to talk, so I told her that the girls can come over here. She told me that the guys might come as well since none of them want us out of their sights again. I said that was fine since Ash is refusing to leave me.

Last night, he wouldn't go to his room to sleep, claimed that someone might come in and steal me away. So, he sat in my rocking chair, since we've still been staying in separate rooms, and watched me sleep.

I woke up, and he was still sleeping so I went to make breakfast. I figured that he's been stressed enough, so I would make him a nice treat. Then I decided to bake some cookies and brownies for when everyone gets here.

The time passed quickly, Ash and I ate and fed the girls, and by the time the brownies and cookies were done, the girls had started arriving.

First came Cleo and Lewis with little Catherine, then Bella with Ashley, Will is still on his way. We had to wait for ten minutes before Rikki and Zane arrive with their twins, and before I could even close the doors, Will come running up.

"Sorry I'm late, Sophie wouldn't let me leave, she's afraid to be alone," he says.

"It's alright. Now everyone let's get in a circle so that we can all be a part of this conversation," I say.

They all move together, and sit on the floor. After everyone is settled, I move to sit next to Ash, and grab Rosemary to put her in my lap. We are all quiet for a minute.

"I had a meeting with the king today," Rikki suddenly says.

"And?" Cleo asks.

"Well, he doesn't really care that much about us or mermaids just about his kingdom, and there's some stupid party for mermaids and mermen to mingle and create life. That's all he cared about," Rikki says.

"And what about everyone knowing?" I ask.

"We've done this all before. I think it's just time to come out. At this point, I don't think we have much choice," Rikki says.

I look at the other two. Cleo's nodding, but Bella looks conflicted.

"Are you sure there's nothing we can do?" Bella asks.

"Well, we can't go back in time to change it. We can't pretend that it was fake. We can't tell them to keep it a secret, it's all over the news. There really isn't anything," Rikki says listing all possible ways.

"What about erasing their memories?"

"We've tried that, it hasn't really worked. At least not for long," Rikki says.

"Okay, so..." Bella says.

"We just have to accept things," Rikki says.

Bella nods.

"Now, what about Charlotte?" Cleo asks.

"What about her? She can handle things on her own, from what I've heard, and if you should help anyone, you should help Sophie, she's freaking out," Will says.

"I don't want to help her, we need to decide if she should go back to jail or not," Cleo says.

"And we shouldn't help Sophie either, it's her fault this happened," Bella says.

"No, it's not. She's a victim here, too," Will says.

"That's a lie. She was greedy and only cared about the money, it's her fault," Bella yells.

Before Will could yell back, I interrupt.

"She's right, Will. I'm not saying that if she asks questions, we won't help her, but this time, we aren't going out of our way to help her," I say.

"Fine," he says glaring at Bella, "I'll send her to you if she need help."

"That's fine, now back to Charlotte," I say.

"I still don't like her, never did, and regardless that she's a mermaid, again, I want nothing to do with her," Rikki says.

"But should she go back to jail?" I ask.

Cleo looks at Lewis, and Rikki look at Zane. They are having silent conversations with each other, and I would look at Ash, but he really didn't know anything until the end, so he doesn't know much.

Should we let her free? I did say that I would talk to the others about it, maybe I should vote for her to be free. After all, she would have learned her lesson, and she got what she wanted, so she'll leave us aloneâ€¦

"I think that she should not go back to jail," I say.

"Even after everything she did?" Cleo questions.

"Yah, maybe jail time was a bit much," I say.

"Really?" Rikki asks.

"Yes, really," I say.

"I'll be honest, I don't actually care," Bella says.

"And why not?" Rikki questions.

"It's not like she's going to bother us anymore," Bella says.

"I guess not," Cleo says.

"If she really leaves us alone then I don't mind, I guess," Rikki

says.

"Then it's been decided. We can let Charlotte free," I say and they all nod.

****At the courthouse****

****Bella's POV****

After we had all decided, we went down to the police station and told them our decision to let her off the hook. She was released and thanked the four of us before leaving. We then proceeded to the courthouse, where the decision on what to do about is coming out.

They told us not to draw attention to ourselves, so that people won't get the wrong idea about this meeting. So, we walk in and quietly take our seats in the back.

The meeting starts.

"Hello, I am the head judge here, and today we have an important issue to discuss. First, we would like the jurors to listen to some testimonies on the subject at hand. In case any of you don't know, the subject is whether or not mermaids should be allowed to live among us. Now here are the testimonies."

Everyone turned to the big screen in the room. On it played the boy's testimonies, followed by random people's thoughts both good and bad on the subject. Then it changed to our statements that we told the police after we escaped. None of us knew it would be played today, I guess they didn't want us to watch what we were saying. It then went back to random people's before changing to our families, and then the people at school and our teachers from high school and college.

It finished with the question:

****Should we allow mermaids into our society?****

The jurors then stood up and went into a chamber, and the judge said that a decision will be made soon.

We had to wait probably about 15 minutes before the jurors come back in and decide to make their decision.

The nominated head juror stands up and says, "On an 11 to 1 vote, we have decided that mermaids have a right to live among us."

The girls and I all smile at this, and can't help, but cheer. The funny part is that we weren't the only ones cheering. Most of the crowd was cheering with us. Although a few were looking rather disappointed.

"That being said, mermaids are to be treated the same as humans are. All laws that protect us, protect them. Anyone breaking the law will go to jail. Case dismissed."

We all get up and leave. Most people are staring at us, but no one says anything. Some are glaring, but I guess we should just get used to it, after all, not everyone's going to be happy.

****Later that night****

****Emma's POV****

Ash and I were playing with the girls, when there was a knock on the door. Ash got up to get it.

"Hi Ash, can I talk to you and Emma," Will asks.

"Of course, come in," Ash replies.

Will walks in and sits on the empty couch.

"Is something up?" I ask.

"Yes, I never got to have Bella's birthday dinner yesterday," Will says.

"Oh my gosh, with everything going on, we forgot her birthday," I say.

"That's alright, she kinda forgot too. Anyways, would you guys be able to do what we planned next Saturday?"

"Uhâ€|yah, sure, we can do it next Saturday," I say.

"Great, thanks," Will says.

"Okay, anything else," Ash asks.

"Ummâ€|yeah, Sophie's really lost, and doesn't want to listen to what I have to say, would you be able to talk to her?"

"Ummâ€|.i could, but I have school and work all week," I say.

"Do you have work tomorrow?"

"No, I don't," I say truthfully.

"So, she can come by tomorrow?"

"Yes, I suppose."

"Thanks Em, she'll really appreciate it, I'm sure," he says then leaves.

As soon as the door closes, I turn back to the girls, who are crawling.

"Ash, Ash, come look," I yell.

He runs back into the room, "What is it?"

"The girls, they're crawling," I say and then they stop.

He didn't seem them crawling so he goes back to making food, when they start crawling again. This time I decide to record it on my phone.

****A/N** I am sooo sorry, first I didn't have the chapter actually written then I type it up and save part of it to finish later, to lose everything. Then i had to walk all day all three days over the weekend, and I've had a tough time retyping this chapter this week. So I am very sorry. ******

****And** even more sorry to tell you that I cant garunttee another update until most likely May 13 or 14****th****. I will try my hardest, and that may seem far away, but I've been so busy and with finals coming, I just can't garentee anything.******

****So** please read, review and enjoy. Thanks for sticking with me.******

****Swimngym-** no worries, thanks for reviewing, and it's okay if you don't review all the time, but could you review this chapter, I'm worried that it sucks. Thanks again! ******

****Chinaluv-** thanks! As always******

****Zikki 3-** owner has been dealt withâ€|well not exactly, but she's off to jail. Anyways, thanks and let me know what you thought of this one. :)******

****Gazillionaire-** as much as I appreciate reviews, and getting them, I was okay with the first one that had all that extra stuff, and a little review. But you pissed me off, giving me another one with nothing in it, so please be respectiful to me and only review, not adding all that extra stuff. I felt very disrespected when all I got was a bunch of crap, so thanks but no thanks, please don't do it again.******

41. Back to Normal

Chapter 39: Back to Normal

****Friday night â€" September 16, 2011****

****At the cafÃ©****

****Zane's POV****

All week I've been going to school, and then work. Rikki would bring the kids here or they were already here because she worked the morning. I barely ever see her, and when I do, she seems angry. Apparently, people have been staring at her, and trying to turn her into a mermaid.

All of the girls have been having that problem. The police had to make a new law about it. People were apparently trying to see if other mermaids were out there besides the girls. It ended up being a disaster, but everything has calmed down.

I decided on Wednesday that I would take her and the twins out tonight. I thought it would be nice to spend time as a family. I told her to be here at 6, and to bring the kids with her. I worked it out with Emma, so that she'd close tonight.

Before I step outside with a rose in my hand, I say, "Thanks again

Emma, I promise to give you and Ash off next Friday night."

"No problem and thanks."

I smile at her and walk out. I stand before the doors, and wait for her. She's going to be so surprised, I told her to dress nice, but that doesn't mean much with me.

I looked at my watch 5:57 pm, any minute now. I look at the red rose in my hand, and suddenly hear, "Well, don't you look nice."

I turn to the voice to see her, coming towards me with the twins in a stroller. They're both wearing nicer clothes, and she's wearing the red dress I bought her for my dad's lunch. She looks just as stunning in it.

"Well, thank you, you look gorgeous by the way," I tell her.

"Thank you, so what's up? Why are we here?"

"I thought you could work like that, and bring in more customers," I say. "Just kidding, but the look on your face was priceless. I thought we deserved a night out as a family."

"You know I don't like surprises, but that is sweet," Rikki says.

"Good, now let's go, your carriage awaits," I say as a horse and buggy pulls up.

****At the McCartney's****

****Cleo's POV****

It's finally Friday, I feel like the week has been never ending. I didn't have work since the owner was sent to jail and the place was shut down. All of us have been out of work all week. I haven't heard anything about if it's going to reopen or not, but I hope it does.

I haven't gotten the chance to call Louri to find out any news. I do hope that a new owner gets to put the marine park back in action. It really was a great place, just a bad owner. I love that I'm getting to be the mother, I want to be. The marine park job took that away from me. I barely got to see Catherine.

For the past week, she hasn't been out of my sight, although it could be because I don't have a reason to leave her.

Anyways, when Lewis gets home, we are going over to my dad's to Skype with Kelly. We haven't had the chance with how busy we've been, but now we have a chance.

Kim tells me that Kelly wants to come back, but she has no idea what she's going to do about her living situation and making money. Apparently, she feels like she couldn't possibly live with Dad and Sam because it would be awkward. I wonder how'd she feel about living with Lewis and I? I should probably talk to Lewis about it first.

****At the café****

****Emma's POV****

Ash promised to bring the girls by tonight for a drink, so that I could see them and him at the same time. All week has been a bit stressful for us, and I've only seen him when we are basically switching shifts or at night before we go to sleep. The good news is that we are both off tomorrow, the bad news: We have to help Will with that dinner.

Although it'll be nice for Bella, I really want to spend time as a family because before we know it, it'll be December 1st, and Ash'll be in Sydney for that internship. It's still months away, but it doesn't stop me from worrying.

I must have been lost in thought because suddenly I'm looking at a frazzled Sophie. Oh yah, I forgot, about herâ€¦

"Hi Sophie," I say.

"Emma, where have you been? I need to talk to you, and all week you've been gone," Sophie immediately starts.

"Sophie, stop. I'm busy right now. I have a busy life with a boyfriend, twin daughters, school, and a job. Give me a break," I say.

"No, I need help, and Will said you'd help one."

"And I will help, but I'm having a rough time of it. I did just restart school, and I'm a little behind. Besides, I can't do much to really help you," I say.

"Yes, you can. Tell me about being a mermaid," she said whispering the word mermaid.

"You don't have to whisper, everyone knows now," I tell her.

"They don't know about me, and I think that I can change back, if you help me," Sophie says.

"There isn't a way to change back," I say as I take two drinks to a table.

She follows me.

"But Charlotte has done it several times, or at least that's what it seems like," Sophie says.

"Then ask her," I say moving to clean up another table.

"But you know, too. You are the reason she has lost it, you and the others."

"The first time, that was true, but that was a special case. Honestly, there isn't anything you can do. So, do as Charlotte says, embrace it," I say.

"I don't want to, and shouldn't have to. I didn't want this," Sophie replies.

"None of us did, except for Charlotte, we all ended up mermaids by accident, and we didn't exactly want it either," I say.

"But you love being a mermaid," Sophie replies.

"I do now, but I didn't at first. You just need to go swimming, but I can't help you, you have to do it on your own," I say.

"But that doesn't help me," Sophie replies.

"Go for a swim, trust me it'll help," I say remembering how it changed the way I felt about being a mermaid.

"Okay, thanks."

****At Cleo's parent's house****

****Lewis' POV****

Cleo and her family are currently talking to Kelly on Skype. I've been sitting on the couch thinking about what Cleo and I talked about earlierâ€¦

She wants to offer Kelly a room at our house. Apparently, Kelly feels awkward accepting a place here, and can't afford a different place. But we barely know her, and we just got married, and we have a daughter.

I look over at them, sitting at the kitchen table, Cleo and Kim sitting in the front, and Don and Sam, who's holding Catherine, behind them. They all look so happy and smiling.

Cleo's already told her what has happened with mermaids being out and the protective laws. Then she introduced her to Catherine, and the conversation went from there.

It's nice to see them happy and talking as a family, but it's getting late and Cleo and I need to get home.

"Cleo, we need to get going," I say getting up, and walking over to her.

"Oh yah, I'm coming. I've got to go, Kelly, but we'll talk soon," Cleo says before saying goodbye to Sam, Don, and Kim. I take Catherine and put her in stroller before saying goodbye as well.

We walked for ten minutes before she spoke.

"You don't like the idea for her to move in, do you?"

"It's not exactly that. With everything that has happened, it just seems like a hasty decision."

"You think?"

"Yes, I do. Maybe she needs parents, did you ever think of that?"

"Actually, no. She's practically been on her own for her whole

life."

"So, why would she need anyone now," I say. "I'm just saying, it might offend her, and we have other things to consider."

"Like what? Everyone knows our secret, there's nothing to worry about," Cleo says.

"Cleo, we're married, we have a daughter. We need to focus on ourselves and her."

"I know that."

"Do you?"

"Yes, but maybe there's room for her too."

"I don't knowâ€¦. Let's think about it."

****The dock****

****Sophie's POV****

After talking with Emma, I came here to the dock, in hopes that I might find some solution to this: My problem.

I've probably been sitting on the edge for an hour, and still nothing. Should I jump in like she's suggested or stay safely on land?

A voice makes me jump.

"You'll never know unless you jump in."

I turn around. Melanie.

"What do you mean?" I ask as she sits next to me.

"You won't know if you could really be a mermaid until you jump in and experience it."

"I don't need to experience it if I manage to get rid of it."

"Oh, but you do. Even if you do find a way, it'll take a while, so why not try to give it a chance."

"You were locked up for being a mermaid, how can you still like it? And I didn't choose this so I shouldn't be stuck with it."

"Oh Sophie, none of us chose this, except for Charlotte, we all had to deal with it. All accept it. It truly is something amazing, no matter how it came about," she responds.

"How did it happen to you?"

"My dad had my aunt do it to me so that she could experiment, and he could be rid of me, but I'm okay. I love it and so does my son."
"

"How can you love it? You were locked up for weeks, and before that,

constantly afraid of what could happen," I say.

"Because it's worth it, but even so, now I have nothing to worry about. Because of you, we are free," Melanie says.

"Free?" I ask.

"We can be mermaids without worrying," she says like it's the most obvious thing in the world.

"So?"

"You are the lucky one. You never had to hide being a mermaid."

"But I don't want it, can't whoever gave it to me, take it back?"

"No, it's a gift. Give a chance. Come on," she says, getting up and pulling me with her.

"It's time for a swim."

****At dinner****

****Rikki's POV****

Dinner was going great, the kids were happy, and the food was good. There was only one thing wrong with this: the stares.

Everyone who's seen us has been staring at us or more particularly me. It's been going on all week, which is probably why Zane thought this was a good idea.

"So, how was this week?"

"A little bit rough," I say. "Yours?"

"Just fine. Why was that?"

"Everyone's been staring at us, and I restarted school, remember?"

"Oh, school isn't that bad, and how do you know they're staring?"

"I just know, and when you haven't pickup up a book in two months, it is hard."

"Well, ignore them, and I can help you."

"It's not that easy and Emma's going to help me get caught up."

"Oh really? That's great, but isn't she behind too?"

"This is Emma we are talking about, of course she isn't behind, well not essentially, she has been basically been keeping up with the work, but hasn't taken any tests or quizzes," I say.

"She's been studying while on maternity leave?"

"Yup, I really wish I knew how she does it," I say.

"You'll figure it out."

****Saturday, 3 o'clock****

****Ash's POV****

I knock on Bella's door with the groceries for their dinner clutched in my arms.

Will answers.

"Come in, come in. Thank you for doing this," he says.

"No problem. Where's Bella?" I ask.

"Well, this is kind of a surprise, so I sent her away," Will answers.

"What if she comes back?"

"Trust me, she'll be gone until six, when I told her dinner will be ready," Will says.

"So, what did you tell her to leave, and to expect when she comes back?"

"That she needs a day off, and that we are going to celebrate her birthday," Will says.

"Okay, so are we still having birthday cake after?" I ask.

"Maybe, if not, we can call the others to have cake tomorrow," he suggests.

"I suppose."

"So, what are you going to make us?"

"Not much, just a nice Italian dinner. I'd like to get back to Emma and the girls as soon as possible," I say.

"She's only right down stairs."

"Even so, I want to spend time with her," I say before getting to work.

****Will's POV****

Ash starts working on the dinner, while I go pick up her present.

"I'm going, out, I'll be back soon," I yell.

I quickly walk home to the boatshed. I enter it, and see Bella's new kitten sitting in her basket, asleep. It's a cute kitten I found at the pet store that's mainly orange, but has specks of white.

I'm glad the kitchen's still okay. I bought her last Friday in hopes of giving her to Bella on her birthday, but things got complicated, so

I've kept her here. I even bought her some food, her bowls, litter basket, and a collar. She's all set up.

All I have to do is wrap everything and bring the kitten to Bella's apartment. I just finished wrapping the last part and was gathering them up, when Sophie knocked on my door.

"Come in," I yell.

"Hey Will, long time no see."

"And whose fault is that?" I ask smiling.

"I'm sorry, it's just been rough week since I became a mermaid."

"You're still having problems saying the word mermaid?"

"It's a hard adjustment."

"Have you gone swimming? That should help."

"Yes, but I don't know. It still feels wrong, somehow."

"It'll get better," I say.

"Every mermaid I've met hasn't had this problem," she replies.

"What about Cleo or her sister Kelly? Both of them hated being mermaids," I tell her.

"I don't really know Kelly, and I don't think Cleo really wants me to be bothering her with this. After all, Emma didn't really want to help me," Sophie says.

"Well, okay. Uhh...I don't know, maybe it just takes time. That's how Cleo learned to accept it," I say.

"Alright, so are you going somewhere?"

"Uh yah, I'm celebrating Bella's birthday with her tonight. Actually, I have to get going," I say.

"Oh that's too bad, I was hoping we could catch up," she says.

"Maybe another time, I'm sorry," I say.

"It's alright, enjoy your dinner with Bella."

"Thanks, see you."

****At almost six o'clock****

****Bella's POV****

I felt better after my swim alone. Will was nice enough to let me relax. He said I deserved it. I look at my phone that is laying in the same at the moon pool.

5:45pm

Opps, time to go.

I hurry home and get to my apartment door at exactly six.

I walk in.

Will's standing in the middle of the room holding a basket, there's presents sitting on the couch, and a beautiful dinner on the table.

"Oh Will, this looks delicious. Thank you," I say.

"Thank you, but I want to give you one of the presents first," Will says holding out the basket.

At first, I thought there was only a pillow, but then I noticed that there was something on the pillow: an orange and white kitten.

"Oh Will, thank you"

A/n I am so sorry that it took so long and that this basically sucked. I hope to finish this story by the end of June, so hopefully that means updating sooner than a week from now. Again, I'm sorry for the waiting please tell me what you think. I hope that it wasn't too bad.

Thank you to all my reviewers, sorry that I'm not replying to any of them this time. I will next time.

Enjoy, read and review

42. Friends?

Chapter 40: Friends?

Same day

Bella's POV

The dinner was delicious, and I enjoyed it, but I couldn't wait to finish to play with my new kitten. Will told me that Ashley is being taken care of tonight.

"So, there's something I want to talk to you about," Will starts.

"Oh really? Are you sure we couldn't just enjoy tonight, and not talk."

"We need to talk, Bella."

"Okay, what about?"

"I don't know what we are, and we need to fix that."

"What do you mean? You asked to start over, we started over."

"But since we talked about that, we've barely spent time together."

"Well, we are busy people."

"Bella."

"What? It's not my fault that we seem like we are avoiding things."

"Fine, so what are we?"

"What do you want to be?"

"Well, what I want, and what is best are two different things."

"Okay, what do you think is best for us?"

"To be friends. To spend time alone as friends, and to spend time as a family."

"Okay, and where are we going to go from there?"

"Hopefully back to where we started."

"So friends?"

"Friends."

****Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2011****

****Rikki's POV****

I am sitting at home, working on homework while Lizzie is watching the kids, when suddenly the doorbell rings.

I answer it.

I'm surprised to see Melanie.

"Hi Melanie," I say while gesturing for her to come in.

"Hi, I came to talk to you as a friend," Melanie says as she walks in.

"As a friend?" I ask.

"Yah, we are friends, right? After all, you guys saved me, and I can't imagine that you'd do that for a nonfriend," Melanie says with a smile.

"Alright then, do you need something?"

"No, but you do. You're still queen for some off reason, so you are responsible for the ballish thing that the mermaid world is supposed to be having on Saturday," Melanie says.

Opps. I forgot.

"Uhhhâ€¦!"

"I'm here to help. I'd figured that you forgot with everything going on."

"So?"

"I'd thought I'd help as your friend," Melanie says.

"I'm okay with that."

"So, I pushed the date back to October 15th, King Jason was upset, but he understood."

"Well, thanks," I say surprised.

"And I can do more if you'd like, I know I haven't been a mermaid long, only a year or two longer than you, but I've been to this ball-ish thing. I know how it goes."

"So, what would you do? What should I do?"

"You don't have to do nything, I'll do it all, as long as we are friends," Melanie says.

"Okay, but why is it so important that we're friends."

"Because I need friends, and I thought it would be nice that we were all friends."

"Okay, thanks, friend."

****Two and a half weeks later****

****October 8****th****, 2011****

****Emma's POV****

Ash and I have been spending time as a family in spare time. I had just laid the twins down for a nap, and went to my room to do some homework even though it's Saturday, when suddenly Ash's knocks on my bedroom door.

"Why are you nocking is your own home?" I ask.

"Well, it's technically your room."

"Okay, well come in," I say.

He walks in, and sits on the edge of my bed.

"I think we should talk," he says.

"Talk about what?"

"Us. I feel like we are together, but we're not."

"What does that mean?"

"We're acting like friends at home, but a couple in public. We go on

dates, we are a family, but we sleep in separate rooms," Ash says.

"What's wrong with sleeping in separate rooms?"

"I feel like you're holding me at arm's length, not letting me get any closer."

"I don't hold you at arm's length," I say.

"You really don't think that you're holding me at arm's length?"

"Yes."

"Emma."

"Okay, maybe you're right."

"Maybe?"

"Okay, you are right."

"So, tell me now, what's the problem."

"The last time I let you in, I got pregnant, you turned on me, we got back together, then you turned on me again, and it's been like a never ending cycle. You've been great, but you could always turn back into the guy you were before the girls were born," I say.

"Or maybe I won't, don't you think I deserve another chance."

"You are leaving though."

"No, I'm not."

"Yes, your internship, remember?"

"Oh that, I forgot, but it's only for a few months."

"Yah, two months away from us, on your own, working in Sydney."

"So? I'm coming back," Ash says.

"Are you? Do you really believe that there isn't a chance that you might want to stay there or even if you don't stay there who says there or even if you don't stay there who says that you'll want to come back to me. Isn't it possible that you'll meet some other girl or even that you find out that you don't want to live on the gold coast anymore. What if you want to live in Sydney permanently?"

"Emma, listen to me. Those are a lot of what ifs, and even if they happened, I would never leave the girls. At this point, I don't think that I can," Ash says.

"Really? Are you sure?"

"Yes, I am. It's okay to let me in now. I'm not going to leave you."

"How can you be sure?"

"Just trust me."

"Okay, but only after you come back."

"You'll let me in, when the internship is over?"

"Yes."

****An advisor's office****

****About 3 o'clock****

****Melanie's POV****

It's been about five weeks since I walked into my college at all. In fact, it took me two weeks to even call the school after I was released. My appointment with my advisor is scheduled for today. She told me on the phone that Nate and Nathan should come with me although I'm not sure why.

The three of us walk up to the doors, and I slowly open one. I'm surprised with how quiet the campus is, but then it is Saturday perhaps people went home.

We quietly move through the school to the offices. We finally reach the office door for my advisor, and I knock.

"Oh Melanie, come in," Miss Micheals says.

"Thanks, I brought Nathan and Nate like you said," I say taking a seat.

"Good, but first I want to talk to you, alone. So, Brenda, please take Nate and Nathan to the common room, Melanie and I will join you shortly," Miss Micheals says to us.

A woman, who I assume is Brenda, comes in and gestures for Nate and Nathan to follow her. After they leave, miss Micheals turns to me.

"So Melanie, it was nice to hear from you," she starts.

"Thank you, I probably should have called sooner," I respond.

"We all understand why you didn't come back right away or even call. You've been through a lot."

"Yes, but I do take school seriously, and I'm hoping that this meeting isn't about me being kicked out," I say fearfully.

"No, no, not at all," she says and I relax.

"Then what is this about?"

"I've talked to your professors and the dean of the school about your situation," she starts.

"And?" I prompt.

"We all agree that it was out of your control, and you shouldn't be penalized for it. So, they decided that you can come back to classes on Monday, and you have been given an extension to finish all your work, tests, and quizzes by the end of the year. December 31st as that will be an additional month to get it all done."

"Wow, that's great. Thanks."

"There's one more thing or maybe a few."

"Okay?"

"Your roommate, and your suitemates came by after you were released from the tank to talk to me about you and the protest. Two of them were there, and they think that you might have heard their arguments."

"I did," I say looking down.

"They apologize, and they want to make it up to you, but I think I'll let them tell you. Will you follow me?" she says getting up, and gesturing for me to follow.

I nod.

We head to the common room without speaking.

As soon as we walk through the door, I'm bombarded with yells of "Welcome back!"

I look around, surprised to see everyone I've met here at the school here. I turn to Miss Micheals. "What is this?"

She doesn't respond, instead my roommate, Amber, and my suitemates, Kat and Lynn, move forward. Amber and Lynn were the two I saw at the protest at the marine park.

"We wanted to apologize for what you may have heard at the protest," Amber starts.

"Even though I felt like what I said was true because I was thinking of you as an animal. I realize now that it's not true. You're still you, not some fish," Lynn says.

"And I fought for you, but for the wrong reasons. I did it to support a cause, not for my friend, as I should have. I'm sorry," Amber says.

"But we do want to make it up to you. Starting with this party," Lynn says.

"And this present," Amber says holding up a box.

I look at her, and then at the box in her hands before taking it.

Inside the box is some keys, I lift them up with a questioning look.

"Those open the door to your new apartment just off the campus. It's three bedrooms, so if you want, I can still roam with you, help with the rent. Not to mention that Jack and Nathan get along great," Amber says.

"I'd love for you to be my roommate, and of course Jack and Nathan could share the third room. At least they will have some more space," I say.

"Yay, and now I can babysit the boys by myself without you worrying," Amber replies.

"And I promise to babysit whenever you need, even though I don't have a kid myself, I'm sure I'll be fine," Lynn says.

"Thanks guys , this really means a lot to me," I say.

"Now let's party," Nate says.

****At the marine park****

****Cleo's POV****

It's been a few weeks since the owner was arrested, and the park closed, but today there's a meeting for all former employees of the marine park. Or at least all who want to get their jobs back.

I'm sitting next to the other dolphin trainers, who apologized for not realizing that my tail wasn't a costume, and not helping me out of it. Most of them seem to understand and think it's cool.

Lewis wanted to come with me, but he needed to work today so Catherine is staying with Sam until the meeting is over.

I've been sitting here for 20 minutes, wondering when this meeting is going to get started, when Louri walks out up front, and waves to get out attention. Everyone quiets down.

"Thank you all for coming today. I'm sorry about what happened and losing your jobs for a few weeks, but I'm pleased to announce that we have a new owner. Mr. Nick Jenson," he says and then starts clapping. The crowd follows suit.

After the crowd settles down, Mr. Jenson begins to speak.

"Hello all, I'm glad to see that not many have left us, and that so many are willing to come back. Welcome back, by the way. You will all be getting your old jobs back, unless of course you'd like to get a different job, in which, if you stay after the meeting is over, I will talk to you individually about it. Anyways, I now that what happened here was a bit confusing, most of you didn't have a clue what was going on, but I promise that everyone will know what's going on from now on."

"There are going to be a few rules set in place so that everyone is safe here, and if anyone has any problems they can tal to me. Also, there will be a meeting every month to discuss any issues. We will be reopening next Saturday, and need to get set upfor that. So, let's get started. Everyone;s new schedule is posted on the wall over

there, and if you didn't know about working today it's because you weren't on for today so don't worry. Good day," he says finishing.

I'm surprised by how fast this all happened, and I had no clue that we would be going back to work so soon. I need to see this schedule, and talk to our new owner.

After everyone else is done with the schedule, I approach. My name is under the dolphin trainers section. All across my line it says 'depends'. No times, no particular days, just depends.

"Hey Cleo, I see you're confused about the schedule," Louri says.

I turn to him.

"Yah, I guess I was expecting something, but a random 'depends' was kind of weird," I say.

"Well, we didn't want to pull you away from your daughter, after all, the old owner didn't give much thought to that at all," Louri says.

"Yes, we feel that you have been mistreated, and we didn't want to mistreat you again. So, I figured we could sit down and talk about your scheduling after the meeting," Mr. Jenson says as he walks up.

"Oh okay, so where did you want to talk?" I ask.

"Uh, is it alright if we just have a seat at this table behind me," Mr. Jenson says.

"Sure," I say and then the three of us move around the table.

"Now there's really not much to talk about obviously you won't be in the shows as a mermaid unless it's what you want to be. We are also going to give you a raise for all the trouble we caused. The only question is what days and how many?" Mr. Jenson asks.

"Ummâ€¦ it doesn't matter which days, but I think that three would be fine, I'm not in school at the moment, so whatever I can get, I'm sure I can find a babysitter," I say.

"Well, okay. How about Monday, Wednesday and Friday Morning?"

"Sounds good. Thank you," I say before getting up and leaving.

On my way out, I run into Charlotte. Literally.

"Sorry," I mumble before attempting to get past her.

"It's okay. Actually, I was hoping that I'd run into you. Not literally, of course, I've just wanted to talk to you," she says starting to ramble.

I'm stunned. I wasn't expecting to see her, let alone her wanting to see me again. Since Lewis and I got married I'm surprised that she'd even bother with either of us.

"Uh okay, why?"

"Well, of all of you, I mistreated you the most, being jealous of you and Lewis. I kind of wanted to make amends, become friends if we could," she says.

"After everything that's happened you think that we can become friends," I ask.

"Truthfully, probably not, but I thought it was worth a try. It's just that, if it wasn't for Lewis, we would have been great friends. Maybe I would have become a mermaid by accident and you would have accepted me," Charlotte says.

"Do you really believe all that?"

"Actually yes, I do. It may seem farfetched, but anything could have happened. I really believe that it might still be possible," she says.

"I guess anything's a possibility."

"So, friends?"

"I'll think about it."

A/N hey guys, sorry for the wait. I'm halfway through the next chapter it should be up soon.

Thanks to Chinaluv, Zikki fan, and H201fan for your reviews.

To the rest of you read, review, and enjoy.

43. Once a Year

Chapter 41: Once A Year

A week Later

Saturday, October 15**th****, 2011**

7 A.M.

Rikki's POV

I had just finished taking care of the twins, when my phone rings.

It's Melanie.

"Hey."

"Hi, everything's all set for tonight."

"Thanks, you seem to have done everything for me," I say.

"No problem, I just knew what to do. I've been around the mermaid

world longer than you. So, I've been to the party a couple times."

"I know, but I still feel bad," I say.

"It's alright, we've got a few things to sort out still, so do you want to meet me for coffee before we go down there?"

"Uh yah, I'll meet you at the coffee shop in 15 minutes," I say then hang up.

"You're leaving already?" Zane asks.

"Yeah, remember we talked about this," I tell them.

"We did?"

"Yes, the mermaid ball thing that happens once a year is tonight," I say.

"Okay, well that's tonight. What about our yearly staff meeting this morning?"

"Truthfully, I forgot, but I don't need to be there," I say.

"You are the co-owner, so you kinda need to be there," Zane says.

I pause. "Please just do it without me, I can't let Melanie continue to do all the work."

"Maybe we should postpone it?"

"No, it's not fair to everyone else," I say.

"Alright, but don't forget, your home is here, not down there," Zane says kissing me, and moves to play with the twins.

"I won't, I'll be back later."

15 minutes later

I walk into the small coffee shop and see Melanie in a corner booth. I head straight for her.

"Hey," I say.

"Hey."

"So, what do we need to talk about?"

"Well, first all the basic party stuff is taken care of. You do have to go early to the ball to make sure that everything is in place, and that you have your speech prepared," Melanie says.

"My speech?"

"Yes, every queen makes a speech to her mermaids about how love is not needed to reproduce, that keeping our heritage going is more important," she answers.

"And who started that crap?" I ask angrily. "Love is needed."

"The first ever queen. In the mermaid world love isn't needed. In fact, most mermaids never feel it at all."

"Seriously? But why?"

"Because mermen don't feel it. They are built to have the feeling of interest in a mermaid only on this day or the day of the ball. The rest of the days, they don't feel anything at all," Melanie says.

"That's just sad. Does that mean that Nathan and James will never feel love?"

"No, because they don't live in the ocean, they aren't true mermen, at least not yet. Only true mermen will never truly feel."

"So, am I supposed to preach something I don't believe in?"

"It wouldn't do to say something else. No matter what, nothing is going to change. Mermaids still don't have the confidence to try for love especially being surrounded by the fact that mermen can't love, and are never around."

"Maybe I'll say something along the lines of love is out there, maybe not down here, but other there," I say.

"I suppose that could work."

"Is there anything else?"

"Uh, I can't remember. Are the others coming?"

"I think not. I can't see why they would," I say.

"Really? I'm surprised now that you guys know about this, that you guys weren't interested in experiencing it, at least once."

"Well, it's kind of pointless. None of us need to find a mate or love for that matter."

"You could go for fun. They don't have to go for that reason," Melanie says.

"Well, I'll let them know," I say.

****At the marine park****

****Cleo's POV****

It's been a week since the meeting and I have been working a few days this week. I'm not actually working today, but Mr. Jenson wanted to speak to me.

As I sit at table by Ronnie's tank, I watch him swimming around. So carefree and happy. It makes me want to just jump in and swim. It's not as though I have to hide anymore. I was so lost in thought that I totally missed Mr. Jenson walking up with a folder in hand.

"Ah, Mrs. McCartney, thank you for coming," Mr. Jenson says before sitting across from me.

"Hi Mr. Jenson, no problem, and call me Cleo," I say.

"Alright, Cleo, I suppose that you want to know why I asked you here."

"Yes, I'm wondering," I say.

"Well, I've been thinking about what happened here, what happened to you and your friends, and I want to make it up to you."

"That's alright, I think that we all just want to forget about it," I say.

"No really, I've been thinking about it a lot, and I think all mermaids deserve something for what happened," he says.

"But what would you give us?"

"A taste of life up here. One day, once a year, for all mermaids to come on land, and see life up here. Free entry to the marine park, and find some restaurants to give free food. They could experience something they never could before, and if say, some might want this permanently then we could have collecting tins that would go to them."

He takes a breath.

"We could also have like a memory video to remind people how badly you and your friends were treated so it doesn't happen again. What do you think?"

"Honestly, I don't know. It's nice, but I'm not sure how mermaids who do live under the sea would feel about it," I say.

"Well, it's still in the works, talk to your friends, and let me know."

"I will," I say shaking his hand before turning away and picking up my phone out of my pocket.

****Later that day****

****Stormy weather****

****Emma's POV****

Sitting at home, taking care of the girls, and listening to the pouring rain, I suddenly see something strange. A pair of eyes.

I blink, and the eyes disappear. I calm myself, and blink a few times. I must have been seeing things. After all, Ash isn't due to be back for another two hours.

He's at work, but plans to pick up a pizza on his way home. I'm glad I didn't have to work after the morning meeting, otherwise I'd get stuck at work. At least now people understand why I can't go out in the rain.

I gaze outside, and see those eyes again. Blinking a few times, I see that I'm not imagining them. I freak.

I start breathing heavily. Someone's watching me through the pouring rain, like some creepy stalker. I can't stay here alone. What if the creeper comes in?

But who can I call?

Not Ash, he's at work. Not Rikki or Cleo, how would they possibly get here? Not to mention that Rikki and Melanie are currently very far under the water. So, who's left? Oh, Bella! She could come in through the indoor entrance, and not get wet.

I dial her number as I see the blue eyes again. I wonder why I can't see the rest of this guy.

Bella answers.

"Emma?"

"Hey Bella, could you come to my apartment?"

"Why?"

"There's someone outside looking through the windows, and I'm scared."

"And you called me?"

"Well, you're the closest, and I couldn't think of anyone else."

"Gee thanks."

"Are you coming down here or what?"

"No, why would I do that?"

"Because I would do it for you," I say.

"â€|"

"Oh no, he's knocking now, what do I do?"

"Put down the phone, at least to your side. Keep me on the line, and on speaker. Then turn on your porch light, and keep the latch locked. You should be able to open it enough to see who this guy is," Bella says.

"Alright, and you'll come running to help if there's trouble?"

"Of course, now go open the door."

I slowly make my way to the door, change the phone to speaker, then flip on the light. I then gather my courage, and open the door.

As soon as I realize that it isn't some creeper, but a friend, I start laughing. I close the door, and unlatch it.

It's Byron.

"Hi Byron. Uh why don't you come in," I say to him.

Then I switch the phone off speaker, and tell Bella, "It's okay, it was just an old friend. Thanks, though. Bye."

Then I hang up.

"Hey Emma, sorry if I scared you, I just wanted to come by and see if it was true."

"See if what was true?"

"Well, I only just got back, and I saw the article about a protest at the marine parkâ€¦"

"And you wanted to know it was true?"

"Well, yes."

"Alright, I'll tell you, but first, does it matter? Is it going to change anything?"

He pauses. "No, you're still my friend."

"Thanks for that. And yes, it's true."

"Can I see?"

"Uhhhâ€¦sure," I say and then pick up the glass of water on the table, and pour it over my other hand. Then I sit on the floor just before I start to change.

"Wow," Byron says as I fully transform.

I look up at him.

"I'm sorry," he matters. "I'm just shocked."

"It's alright, it's one thing to know, it's another to see," I say.

"That's for sure."

"Yah, so could you hand me a towel?"

"Sure, but can I take a picture first?"

"I'd prefer that you didn't."

"Why?"

"I just do."

"Okay," he says looking disappointed, but hands me a towel.

After I dry off, I move to the table, and offer him some tea or coffee.

"Coffee's fine, I'm still a little jet lagged," Byron says.

"So where have you been if you only just found out?"

"My parents and I went to America to visit our family there for close to a year before I had to come back for the yearly surfing competition."

"Oh that's nice. How did you do?"

"Really well, I got second place."

"Congrats, so why do you come back?"

"I decided to do school here."

"That's great."

"So, your daughters," he says.

"Yah, that's Lilly-Anne, and Rosemary."

"So, I guess we'll never have another shot?"

I'm speechless. "â€|"

"I'm sorry, I guess a lot has changed. I thought that maybe when we were both back in town, we could try again," he says looking down.

I pause. I'm surprised that he's still interested in me.

"That's sweet, Byron, but I've got my girls to think about," I say.

"Yes, I understand. I wouldn't have bothered if I'd known I didn't stand a chance."

"It's not that, it's just at 19, with twins and the fact that you're not their father. It'd be too hard even if things didn't work out with Ash," I say.

"Thanks for that."

"I'm sorry."

"Still friends?"

"Of course, well I should go, sorry for scaring you."

****Under the sea****

****The night almost over ****

****Melanie's POV****

The ball was going well. Rikki and I are sitting above the floor where all the mermaids and mermen are dancing with king Jason on the other side of the hall.

From where I sit, I can see several mermaids off to the side seemingly not interested as they usually are. It probably has to do with Rikki's speech, it was incredible. She talked about love and how it's out there, how we are all entitled to it whether it be under the water or up above. She said that this ball brings us together temporarily, which is okay, but if any of us wanted a more permanent love life then she would help us get there. It appears that the mermaids, at least some of them, took her words to heart. Maybe, just maybe more mermaids will come up there sometimes, too.

Although King Jason wasn't all too happy with her speech. He believes in mermaid- merman relationships not mermaid- human relationships. He wants us to be "pure" in a way. He is like that because it's not as if he gets to ever walk on earth. No full grown merman has that ability, which reminds me.

"Hey, Rikki," I say turning to her.

"Hi Melanie," she says slowly.

"I remembered what I wanted to talk to you about."

"And?"

"Um, adult mermen can't change in between human form and merman form."

"What does that mean?"

"That at sixteen, which is the age of adulthood down here, a merman living on the surface must choose between the two."

"Choose?"

"Yes, um they have to either give up being a merman or become a full merman living under the sea with King Jason, and the other mermen."

"Okay, so why are you telling me?"

"your son will have to choose as will mine, and anyothers we could have," I say.

She pauses.

"Hopefully we can worry about that later, there's still years, but there is something else I wanted to talk to you about."

"There is?" I ask.

"Yes, I've been thinkingâ€¦ You did all this, you were the one that has been doing all the work as Queen without the title," she says.

"I'm more than happy to help," I say.

"Well, I feel like you deserve something for all the work you're done."

"Oh?"

"Yes, I know that queens can change only once a year, but I'd really like to give it to you. I want you to be the queen as long as you want to, of course."

"I'd love to, but you have to help me with the speeches."

"Sure as long as you make me a promise first."

"Okay, what is it?"

"Promise that if any of us get pregnant that you will do what I did, make the process easier by making sure we won't change," Rikki says.

"You have a deal."

"Great, so the full moon in March, I'll give it to you."

"Thanks."

****Same night****

****Bella's POV****

After I got off the phone with Emma, I sat down with Ashley to play with Pumpkin.

Ashley really loves my new kitten, and that her father has been spending lots of time with us.

Just as I was thinking about that, he walks through the door.

"Hey," he says.

"Hey, no knocking?"

"I've been coming over every day for the last few weeks, why should I knock if you are going to leave it unlocked."

"I guess that's a fair statement," I say with a smile.

"Alright, well, there's this family reunion that I came to tell you about."

"And?"

"I need your help."

****A/N hey guys, here it is, a bit later than I planned, but it is here.****

****I hope you enjoyed it, and I have a question for you all.****

****In the light of what Melanie told Rikki, I was thinking maybe I should do a TEN years later instead of FIVE years later, what do you think? Let me know in reviews.****

****Thanks to Zikki 3, H2olfan, Chinaluv, and Swimngym for reviewing**

last time**

44. Families again

Chapter 42: Families

Same day

Will's POV

"My help?"

"Yes, well, first off my family doesn't know about Sophie being a mermaid, and I was wondering if you could talk to her or trying to teach her how to avoid water. And second, my family wants to meet you and Ashley, but they don't know that don't know that we aren't engaged anymore," I say.

"But we weren't engaged very long," I say ignoring the rest.

"But everybody knew, and they expect it with us having Ashley and all."

"So you want me to go with you, watch out for Sophie, and pretend that you didn't take the ring back," Bella says looking upset.

"I'm sorry, I just don't know what to do. And it's your fault that I took the ring back," I say giving her a look.

She looks away. "They'll be expecting a wedding sooner or later."

"And it'll happen eventually don't you think? We just need to grow up first."

"Yeah, I guess."

"So, you'll talk to Sophie."

"I suppose."

"Tomorrow?"

"No, I have to talk to the girls. Cleo has something to talk to us about," Bella says.

"Okay, well do t soon, like after your talk with the girls," I say being a bit pushy.

"Pushy much?"

"Yes, she needs help, and it's only a few weeks away," I say.

"Alright, I'll talk to her soon."

Sunday Morning

9 o'clock

****A the cafÃ©****

****Cleo's POV****

I asked the girls to meet me here, so that I can tell them about them new owner's ideas. Unfortunately, after I called Rikki, Emma, and Bella, I realized that I needed to include Melanie, and then I looked at the situation and noticed that I have two others to call: Sophie and Charlotte.

"Thanks for calling," Charlotte says as she approaches the booth.

"No problem."

"Does this mean that we can be friends?"

"Actually, my call has nothing to do with that," I say.

"Oh?"

"Yah, I'll wait for everyone else to get here before I let you know what it is," I say.

"Alright, do you want a drink? I'll buy," Charlotte says with a smile.

"If you insist," I say with a small smile.

She smiles back, and then goes to the counter.

"Found a new friend?" a voice asks behind me.

I turn around to see Rikki walking in.

"I didn't say that, but I felt that this affected her, Sophie, and Melanie too," I say.

"You said it was something about the marine park so Melanie I can see, but the other two? I think not."

"Well, to be safe, I included them," I say.

"Alright," Rikki says as Charlotte comes back.

"Hi Rikki," she says with a smile.

Rikki pauses. "Hi Charlotte."

"I see you still don't like me," Charlotte says.

"It's hard to get over what you've done," Rikki says.

Charlotte doesn't respond as Emma, Bella, and Melanie walk up. Before they could say more than hi, Sophie walks in and heads over.

After everyone gets settled, I tell them everything that Mr. Jensen told me.

"Okay, well, I don't care. I don't want to have anything to do with this crazy world. So, leave me out of it," Sophie says before getting up and leaving.

"Okay!" I say.

"Don't worry about her, Will asked for me to talk to her after this is over," Bella says.

"Alright, well, what do you guys think?" I ask.

"I think that it's alright," Emma and Bella says.

"I think it's brilliant," Rikki says.

"Really why?" I ask.

"It'll give other mermaids the chance to live up here. Experience what we have," Rikki says.

"I agree, especially after the speech that you made last night," Melanie says.

"Speech?" I ask.

"That doesn't matter, the point is. It's a great idea," Rikki says.

"I agree, since people know, why not let us share and kind of celebrate with other people. Not to mention how good it will be for people to understand us or at least see us as more than some creatures," Charlotte says.

"Well, that's a roundabout way of saying it's a good idea," Emma says.

"Is that to say that you agree that it's a good idea?" I ask.

"Yes, I think I do, but I've got to start work or my boss'll fire me," Emma says as a joke while looking at Rikki.

"Yah, yah, you better get to work," Rikki says then turns to us, "And I have to get going too, my parents have some sort of surprised for us."

Rikki leaves, and that leaves Bella and me with Melanie and Charlotte.

"Everyone seems to like the idea so I'll jump on the band wagon. I agree. Unfortunately, I need to go talk to Sophie," Bella says then waves good bye as she walks out.

"Well, I hate to say this, but I've got things to do, too," Melanie says before saying good bye and leaving.

Which just leaves Charlotte and me.

****Charlotte's POV****

After Melanie left, it was just me and Cleo, which is perfect.

"So, um, would you like to go for a swim?" I ask.

"Uhh.â€|"

"It won't take too long I'm sure," I say.

"It's not that, I just still don't know," Cleo says slowly.

"Well, we could, um, use this as a temporary thing. I don't really know how to approach this, but I do know that I want a chance," I say.

"I'm still thinking about it," Cleo says.

"Just one swim, we can take our time working on our friendship," I say.

"Our time?"

"I know that you have no reason to trust me, obviously, but given time maybe you could again. I'm not asking to hang out every day like you do or at least used to with the others. All I want is to slowly become friends. Have a coffee every once in a while or go for a swim," I say trying to convince her. Maybe I'll be allowed to hang out with them if Cleo learns to trust me.

"Alright, one swim."

****At the docks****

****Bella's POV****

I'm surprised to see Sophie sitting at the end of the dock of all places.

I start to walk on the dock, but stop about ten feet away from her. How do I start this conversation? I guess by starting with a storyâ€|

>I slowly approach her, and sit on her left side.<p>

"Once upon a time, there was this little girl, not even in the double digits yet, who was lonely because her parents worked a lot, and moved often. She was meant to be learning Irish from her tutor/babysitter, but the babysitter became distracted by her two best friends, who came over to gossip. The little girl then asked to play outside, and the babysitter waved her off."

I pause.

"So, then the little girl, feeling ignored, goes outside, and begins to wonder. She had only been there a few weeks, and her curiosity was peaked. She wandered further and further until she found a cave. Forgetting how late it seemed, and that she should be home when the moon is out, she climbs into the pool in the cave. The full moon goes straight about the pool, and it begins to bubble. The girl looks around, and smiles. After the bubbles subside, the little girl gets out of the pool, and goes home. No one even noticed that she was gone."

Sophie looks at me, but I continue.

"The next morning she discovers something amazing. She grows a tail and turns into a mermaid every time water touches her skin. She's so thrilled, but scared at the same time. As young as she is, you'd think she'd have told the world, but she didn't. She kept it a secret for fear of what could happen."

"Two years later, she found out that she did the right thing, because her sisters she had never known were went away for being the same thing. So, she went on with her life, feeling alone, and keeping secrets until she met two others just like her. A boyfriend, who loved her even though she was a mermaid, and many others. And now she doesn't have to hide anymore, now she's free," I finish.

"That's your story isn't it?" she asks.

"Yes," I answer simply.

She looks back out at the water, and asks, "Why did you tell me this?"

"Because you needed to hear it. My story is rough. From a young age, I've been hiding, afraid of what could be. You don't have to. You will never have to hide or worry. You can. But it's not something forced on you. You are free."

"I may not need to hide, but I want to. I don't want anyone to know I'm a freak," Sophie responds quietly.

"Did my story have no impact on you? My mother rejected me and my sisters, and yet somehow I got over it, and now the majority of people are okay with it. Look, if you are worried about your family, then at the reunion I'll test the waters. If they seem okay with me and Ashley, then you should tell them," I say.

"What if I find a way to change back, how would I explain that?"

"Why don't you try giving it a chance? Let's swim," I say. I wait for her to get up, and nod before grabbing her hand, and diving in.

****At the soon to be Bennetts****

****Rikki's POV****

Zane and I are sitting on the couch with James and Maria in our laps. My sister sits next to me, and my parents sit on the couch across from us.

"So, thanks for letting us meet here," My mom says.

"No problem, but why did you want to meet anyway," I say.

"Your mother and I have a surprise for you girls," my father says.

"What is it?" Lizzie asks.

They look at each other, and then count to three.

"We're getting remarried!" they say together.

"Wow, congratulations," we all say.

"Thanks," my mom says.

"So when is it going to happen?" Lizzie asks obviously excited.

"What about the first weekend in November?" Zane asks.

"Sure, that works for me," my dad says.

"Works for me, too," my mom says.

"Then it's settled," I say smiling.

****Through the water to the beach****

****Sophie's POV****

Swimming with Bella is different than swimming with Melanie somehow.

As we swim slowly, I compare the two in my mind.

My first technical swim, if you don't count the escape swim from the marine park, was with Melanie. I went with her out of obligation. She came out to help me, and I knew that I had to jump in with her. Even though I did, my mind wasn't open to possibly liking being a mermaid.

I dove in thinking that no matter what I was going to come out still hating that I am a mermaid, and that's what happened. I continued on avoiding the fact that I am a mermaid until today.

When I got called into the meeting or whatever it was today, I didn't realize that it was about a mermaid thing. I got so mad that they even considered calling me for something like that.

I ran out of the caf  , and ended up on the dock.

I have to say that I was shocked that Bella, of all people, came to talk to me, but I was touched that she did, whatever the reason.

Her story really changed my mind. Everything she went through, at such an age, and even everything now   I felt like I should really give it a chance since she seemed to be having a hard time telling me her story.

And the end of it, and all the questions, when she asked me to jump in and swim, I was open willing to give it a chance.

It is absolutely incredible. Somehow, my openness to this makes this swim vastly different from the first one. Suddenly, I feel like I belong. Suddenly, everything is at peace. I feel like I'm floating through the water, and the fishes are gliding with me. To see the fish and dolphins swimming next to me.

I smile.

Then I realize that I might be out of breath. I look to Bella, and point up.

As we approach the surface, I notice how close we are to Mako.

"You shouldn't need to breathe, you should be fine. But then it might take time for you," Bella says.

"Thanks, but could we go to the beach over there?" I ask.

"Sure follow me," Bella says then grabs my hand to pull me over.

When we reach land, she helps me pull myself out of the water.

"Thanks," I say.

"No problem, so how was it?"

I look at her, and then pause.

"Honestly, way better than the last time. You talking to me, telling me your story really helped," I say honestly.

"I'm glad, so anyway," she says.

"I'll help you with the reunion," I say.

"Help me?"

"I know that they still believe you two are engaged," I say.

"You do?"

"Mom and dad asked me when you were going to set a date and I didn't answer, but I did go talk to Will," I say.

"Ah, I see. So, how are you going to help me?" she asks.

"Well, by telling you that if anyone asks just give vague answers. Say things that you know you might want in your wedding like your bridesmaids would obviously be the girls," I say.

"That's good, and if things get complicated I could just grab Will, he'll probably be by me anyway," she says.

"Exactly!"

Then the conversation changes to almost run-ins Bella has had growing up. Including when Will figured her out.

An hour later, after hearing some of her stories, I ask, "Do you think I could pull it off?"

"Honestly, probably not, but if anything they'll be more focused on me. And I'll help you, I promise."

"So does this mean we've made amends?"

"Amends?"

"Um, yeah, I didn't want to jump straight to friends, it seems a little odd. But if we could just understand each other, maybe I could come around more?"

"Just because we didn't get along doesn't mean that you couldn't come over," Bella says.

"So, about my questionâ€¦"

"Yes, I would say we have," Bella says.

"That's great," I say.

"Really why?"

"I know how much it's hurting my brother, and I'd like to spend more time with my niece," I say.

"Well then, by all means, let's go see her," Bella says with a smile.

I nod and smile as the two of us take off swimming.

****At the cafÃ©****

****Ash's POV****

I was working again, and just finished clearing off a table, when my older sister, Lynn walks in.

"Not again," I say as she approaches. She's taken to haunting me at work because I won't let her come over to the apartment. She's never met Emma, and she's only met the girls once.

"Come on, Ash, you know you can't hide them from me forever," Lynn says.

"No I can't, but I can try."

"And fail. Ash, mom and dad are really upset with you. That's part of the reason I've been bugging you for weeks. Ever since you moved in with Emma, and told us."

"I told you no," I say irritated.

"Fine, I'll do it on my own," she says walking out.

****A/N hey guys sorry of the wait.****

****I don't know if I mentioned whether or not Ash had siblings, but he does now. ****

****Thank you all for reviewing.****

****Aleesha- thank you, and I will be trying to do more chapters before moving forward. I guess I realized with your review that maybe I**

shouldn't gloss over the raising of the kids.**

Zikki 3-I will be talking a little about how Byron affects Ash and Emma next chapter. Thank you for reviewing, and I'm thinking ten years might be good as well as five, but it depends on how much time passes during this story.

Zikki 3- thank you, I will try to keep up the good work, and maybe there is something between Emma and Byron.

Swimngym- thanks I thought it seemed right that Rikki would do that. I think that I would get confused doing both five years and ten years.

Chinaluv- thanks as always!

All- I will update soon I promise, but I haven't started to new chapter so I'll have to work hard.

Thanks for reading. Review and enjoy

45. Reunions

a/n hey guys sorry for the wait, I just want to promise you that even though I keep changing how many possible chapters there will be until the end, I will never give up. So, read, review and enjoy. Thanks for everyone who has been reading and/ or reviewing. Byes.

Chapter 43: Reunions

One week later- Sunday, October 23**rd**

At Emma and Ash's apartment

Emma's POV

I was once again at home studying and taking care of the girls, while Ash was at work.

Knock. Knock.

Assuming I know who it is, I yell, "Come in."

The door opens, and Byron appears. After that night, he offered to come over and help with the girls while catching up. It's kind of awkward because not even a week ago, he admitted that he's still interested in me, but we were good friends before that, and he knows that's all we are.

He's been coming over for about an hour every day. Just to visit and help look after the girls while I study. I haven't told Ash because I don't want him to take this the wrong way. I'm not interested in Byron, but he's good with kids, so when he offeredâ€¦ I took it.

I was just about finished, and going to tell Byron he could leave, when there's a knock on the door.

Byron's closest to the door since he was leaving, so he opens it.

A strange dark haired girl is on the other side of it.

She was smiling, but he smiles falls as she locks her eyes on Byron.
"You're not Ash or Emma. Who are you?"

I approach. "I could ask you the same thing," I say.

"I'm Lynn, Ash's older sister. You must be Emma, and who's this guy?" she asks.

"My friend, Byron," I say.

"Well, does Ash know about this Byron," Lynn says looking angry.

"Byron, you should get going," I say to him.

He nods and waves goodbye.

"And you can come in," I say to Lynn.

"Thank you," she says and sits on the couch.

"No problem."

"So, who is that guy? Are you cheating on my brother? Does he know? Is that why he doesn't want me to come by?"

"I don't know why he doesn't want you to come over. I haven't cheated on him. Byron is an old friend who has been coming by all week to play with the girls while I study. I didn't ask, he just offered. Anyway, Ash doesn't know because it never came up. I didn't think it was important," I say.

"That sounds suspicious," Lynn responds.

"It's not at all," I say.

"Then tell Ash that there's been another guy that's been coming over every day," Lynn says.

"What's the point of that?"

"The point is that if there's nothing to hide why not tell him?"

"Tell me what?" a voice asks from the door way.

****At the McCartney's****

****Cleo's POV****

Sunday's have been our family day for us. At Lewis' request, I asked not to work at Sundays and as that's Lewis's work's official day closed it works out that we can spend the day together.

I was the last one up with Catherine, so Lewis made breakfast.

I grab Catherine from her crib, and head downstairs. "Morning," I

say.

"Good morning," Lewis says as he approaches me to give me a kiss.

"What are we doing today?" I ask as we sit down for breakfast.

"I don't know, maybe a day at the beach? We could go to Mako?"

"Do you really want that?"

"Maybe, it's just a suggestion. She's still pretty young, not even two months, and there's no reason to take her anywhere she won't remember."

"Okay, I see your point," I say.

"We could just take her to the caf  , let her see the others," Lewis suggests.

"I guess, but I thought it would just be the three of us," I say thinking that if the others were at the caf  , it wouldn't just us.

"What about a walk?"

"That sounds fair, any destinations in mind?" I ask.

"No, let's just walk, and see where we end up," Lewis says.

So, twenty minutes later, sees Lewis, Catherine and I walking down the street.

Catherine is in her stroller, and Lewis is pushing it.

"So, how's work and school?" I ask.

"Work is going really well, they want me to consider to go down to part-time schooling to spend more time working. They say that I'm learning much more in the field, so to speak."

"Really?"

"Yes, what do you think?"

"Isn't it wiser to finish school first," I say.

"Maybe, but as I have a job that I planned to continue with after I finished, does it matter?"

"I suppose not, I mean, as long as they don't hold you back at all," I say.

"So you're okay with me only taking two classes each semester? It'll end up taking twice as long," Lewis says.

"You could do that if you want, it's not like you'll have to give up you job," I say.

"Thanks," he says with a smile as we turn a corner towards my dad's

house.

We opted to head there even though it might not have been our first destination.

There was still over a block to go. As we get closer, I can see people standing outside on the lawn of one of the houses. I wonder who's house that is.

"Is that who I think it is?" Lewis asks.

I take a closer look. Is that my mom? "Who do you think it is?"

"It looks like your mom," Lewis says.

"Really? That's what I'm thinking, too," I tell him.

"Then let's find out," he says.

So, we immediately move faster towards the house, and we see that it is indeed my mom and now red haired Kelly talking to my dad and Sam.

"Mom?" I yell as we approach.

"Cleo, how are you?" Kelly asks.

"I'm good, what are you doing here?" I ask.

"I finished early," she says smiling.

"And mom?" I ask.

"I decided to get over myself. I can't change my views, but I want to try to have some relationship with you girls," my mom says.

I look at Kelly, who has a grimace on her face. It's obvious that she hadn't planned this and would like nothing more than for mom not to be here. To be honest, neither do I, mom left us, doesn't like us at all, and promptly doesn't care. Sam pretty much has been here for us. She's not my mom, but she is a mother like figure, especially as she accepted us for what we are. I look to Lewis.

****Lewis' POV****

I'm shocked to see Kelly, let alone Cleo's mom. I see her looking at me. Questioning whether or not she should let her mom back in, especially because it's not like she changed her mind about them being mermaids, but she wants to tryâ€¦

I nod at Cleo.

She understands that I'm telling her to give her mom a chance.

"Maybe I can give you a chance, but you're going to have to change your views," Cleo says.

"I'll work on it. Now is this my granddaughter?" Cleo's mom asks.

We all smile and nod as our attention turns to Catherine.

****Will's POV****

Sophie and I head over to Bella's apartment to pick up her and Ashley. I was surprised that Sophie and Bella are more than just on speaking terms. They're actually friends.

In the last week, Sophie's been at Bella's apartment more than me. As we reach the door, the door swings open.

"Hey, I was just about to wait outside for you guys," Bella says.

"Alright then, well let's go," I say.

We go outside and walk towards the docks. My parents decided to host the reunion on their boat. It's big enough to hold everyone and there's a party room inside. It's almost like a cruise ship except smaller, and not nearly as long. We reach the ship and Bella looks at me strangely I forgot to mention that it's on a ship.

"Will, did you forget to mention something?" she asks.

"Uhhâ€¦. Sorry, but it's okay my family will be careful, I promise," I say. Then I grab her hand, and pull her up to the stairs. Sophie picks up Ashley as Bella and I pick up the stroller. We walk up the stairs then Sophie puts Ashley back. Time for the reunion to start.

The first people to approach us are my younger cousins, who take turns to either gush at Ashley or Bella's ring, which I gave back to her incase anyone asks. We all move to the indoor party room, where more people bombard us.

Over the next few hours, Bella does well, getting along with my family and avoiding any possible mention of her being a mermaid. We get separated a few times, but everything appears fine. We finally get a chance to sit down and eat, when I forget to grab her a straw for her drink.

"I'll be right back," I say to her and hurry to get the straw.

As I reapproach, I hear my uncle asking, "Why do you need a straw?"

"I don't, I just prefer it," Bella answers.

"Really? Then we haven't you drank anything even though your mouth is on fire?"

"I can wait," Bella says trying to deflect the question.

"Besides, I'm already back," I say in hopes of ending the conversation.

It worked.

Ten minutes later, one of my cousins, who was a little tipsy, accidentally spilled her drink on Bella, who looked up in horror. Even

though everyone knew she is a mermaid, no one has mentioned it, so it was almost like no one knew. The way she freaked out.

She gets up to run away, but there's nowhere to hide. Just as she goes to change, I get up to catch her, but she falls forward instead of backward.

"Ouch."

"I'm so sorry," my cousin yells.

Bella flips over, and says, "It's alright, but could you get me a towel?"

My cousin runs to get a towel as Sophie tells everyone who's starting that they need to stop.

"Here you go, I'm sorry again," my cousin says as everyone follows Sophie's advice and things go back to normal.

"Thanks," Bella says as she starts to dry off.

As she gets back into her seat, my uncle looks at Bella, and asks, "I thought that mermaids had gold tails?"

"They do, at first," Bella answers then asks, "How do you know that?"

"Oh umâ€¦. I just did some research when it was on the news," my uncle says.

"Research?" Bella asks. "If you know a mermaid, you don't have to hide it."

"She's still being quiet about it," my uncle mumbles.

"So you know one," Bella says.

"I do. My daughter, Olivia, she's over there," he nods towards the drinks table.

We both turn to look at her before turning back. "How long?" I ask.

"A few months. She told me when she realized it the next day," my uncle says.

"I'm glad that she wasn't alone," Bella says.

"But she is, she doesn't know any other mermaids."

"Well, I could talk to her every once in a while, show the ropes," Bella says quietly.

"I'd appriecate it," my uncle says.

****At his apartment****

****Ash's POV****

I walked in to see that my older sister and Emma are sort of yelling at each other standing a distance of ten feet apart and Lynn seems to be questioning Emma.

"Tell me what?" I repeat.

"That her ex-boyfriend has been coming over every day for a week," Lynn answers not looking at me.

"That makes it sound way worse than it is. Look, he came back last week, and we caught up. Then he said he loves kids and would love to babysit sometime, so I said sure, but I wouldn't leave him alone without your permission, so he's been coming over while I study," Emma says.

"Why didn't you say anything?" I ask a bit angry.

"I never thought about it, I didn't think it was important," Emma says. "I wasn't trying to hide it."

Truthfully, I understand what she's saying. We've been so busy, we barely see each other, so why bother bringing it up?

>"I understand, besides it's not like you were sneaking around or anything," I say.<p>

"That's it? You're not angry?" Lynn questions.

"Yes, that's it. But I am mad at you," I say turning to her.

"What, why?" Lynn asks.

"I told you not to come over here," I say to her.

"Well, I'm sorry, but I do believe that your family would like to meet your daughters," Lynn says.

"I understand that, but I told you that it takes time, and we're busy," I say.

"Who cares if you're busy?"

"I do."

****At the mall****

****Rikki's POV****

Lizzie and I are walking through dress shops to pick out the dresses we'll be wearing at our parent's remarriage. They opted to just have the two of us as the witnesses since they decided to do it at the court house. Zane's going to miss it because it's been decided that he should be watching the twins. Besides, they probably won't sit still long enough for the ceremony, and he's not a part of our family, yet.

"I like this dress," Lizzie says holding up a bright yellow strapless dress. "And it comes in different colors, if you don't like yellow."

"Well, If you want to be technical, I'm the 'best man' so maybe I

shouldn't wear a dress," I say laughing.

"You are our dad's witness, that doesn't make you a best man," Lizzie says.

"It was a joke, Liz," I say.

"I know, but you're wearing a dress," she replies with a smile.

"Alright, then," I say.

We browse around for another twenty minutes before finding a short knee length dress, that had thick straps and a kind of modest and plain. It works out that the dress looks good on both of us, and dad wanted us to look more modest since he still sees us as his daughters.

"Do you want to do the same color dress or different ones?" Lizzie asks.

"Which color do you want?" I ask.

"I'd like a dark purple," Lizzie says.

"Here's dark purple," I say pulling out the dress for her.

"What about you?" she asks.

"I'll go with this dark red, sound good?"

"Sounds great," she says with a smile.

****At her apartment****

****Bella's POV****

I just finished putting Ashley down for the night, and sat down to think about this afternoon. Somehow, I managed to get everyone there to like me. No one questioned whether or not I was excited about the wedding or being a mom.

Everything was great, and when I got wet, no one reacted badly, but somehow I ended up with another new mermaid to mentor. But that's okay, hopefully it'll make Will realize that I'm a good person after all, and he'll fully forgive me, and maybe we could get the engagement back on.

Suddenly, there's a knock on the door that shakes me from my thoughts.

I get up and answer the door.

I'm shocked, it's my mom.

She staring at me, and looks shocked to see me at my apartment.

"Hello?" I say.

She shakes her head. "I didn't think you were home, I was going to leave a letter."

"Well, I am home. Do you have something to say?" I ask.

"I'm sorry. My views back then and even recently have changed. All three of my daughters are mermaid, and so is my granddaughter, and any other grandkids that I may have. I don't want to distance myself from all of you, so I hope to reestablish a relationship with you."

I'm speechless.

46. school blues

****Attention: hey guys I'm sorry that I've been struggling so much with this story. I promise to not put up a story until I finish it the next time. Anyway, I'm putting this story on Hiatus, I'm sorry I'm struggling enough as it is without adding school. So, I've decided that after this chapter, it's on hiatus until December. Hopefully, it'll be almost finished by then. Thanks for everything, and enjoy.****

Chapter 45: School Blues

****A few days later****

****October 27****th****, 2011****

****Late afternoon****

****Bella's POV****

I was just getting to my apartment after my longer school day. Will has Ashley, so I'm looking forward to just relaxing and ignoring my school work.

Unfortunately, that's not what happened.

Emma was standing at my door, knocking.

"Em? What are you doing here?"

"I'm sorry, I figured you were home already. I just wanted to drop off a couple school letters," she says.

I reach out and take them. "Thanks."

"No problem, I better get downstairs. See you," she says then leaves.

I unlock my door, and head inside. Leaving my back pack by the door, and my purse on the counter. I take my shoes and sweater off before sitting on the couch, and looking at the letters in my hands.

The first was an invitation to a battle of the bands competition that's taking place over the summer, which sounds amazing.

The second was a letter from my mom. She intended to leave the first

letter on my door, a few days ago. Seeing me, she blurted out how sorry she was, but that she had a plan to get all her daughters to think about giving her a chance. She made a plan with the post office to send one letter every week in order for a year.

She didn't want us to just give in, she feels that we should get to take our time accepting her. So, after what she said when she came by a few days ago, she handed me the letter and then left. I open the letter.

_My dear Bella, _

_I hope that you are still willing to even read this as I would completely understand you throwing the letter away as soon as you get it. _

Anyways, if you're still reading this, I want you to know that I'll always love you even if you are different now. When I cut off ties with your sisters, I tried not to think of them, but I did. I couldn't help it, even years after I sent them away, but this is about you.

_I've watched you grow up, and I never intended to give up on you, even if you were turned into being a mermaid. I knew it was inevitable that you would become one someday. _

But I ignored it, even after I figured out the truth, I tried to ignore it. I want to love you no matter what, and now I think I do.

I love you.

Your mother.

I read the letter through a second time, and smiled. The first letter that she gave me basically just told me that she understands that we might throw away the letters and ignore them, but she hoped we wouldn't. It wasn't as heartfelt as the second letter, actually it didn't seem heartfelt at all. Just a basic apology and a please give me a chance.

I put the second letter with the first, and proceed to the third piece of mail.

It has the address of my school on it. I frown. Why would I be getting a letter from school?

I flip it over to open it, and quickly read through the letter.

_Dear Miss Hartley, _

It has come to the attention of the registrar's office that you have been academically withdrawn from your maths course. This has been due to absences after you officially came back from maternity leave, therefore you have obtained an incomplete for this course. You may finish this course in the fall semester or the following spring.

_We have also placed you on academic probation as you are failing two

other courses. We advise you to focus and go to tutoring in order for you to pass._

_You have until the end of the full semester to bring your G.P.A. up to at least a 2.5. _

Good luck.

Office of Registrar.

When I finish reading, I yell out angrily. How is this fair? What am I supposed to do? How can I bring up my grades in just a month? I want to scream and yell, but I can't. Now it's even more important that I study and do my homework.

And get a tutor? Who would be able to tutor me?

****At Mako****

****Cleo's POV****

Lately, Lewis has been trying to get me out of the house. He feels bad that I'm usually the one that's always with Catherine, even though she's my daughter and it's my job to take care of her. So, he's been giving me time every few days to go for a swim. It's really sweet of him to think of me, and let me have time to myself.

As I position myself on the ledge, I see someone else swimming in. I recognize that it's Charlotte.

Oh no, not again. I feel like every time I do leave the house on my own, Charlotte finds me. She really wants to be my friend.

"Hi Cleo, fancy seeing you here," Charlotte says with a smile.

"Hi Charlotte," I say tonelessly. I'm getting tired of her always showing up.

"What's the matter?" she asks.

"Nothing, I just wanted to be alone, and I just got here," I say quietly.

"Oh okay, I'll make this quick then," Charlotte says.

"What?" I ask.

"I want to start college, but two of the three schools in the area rejected me because of my "criminal" record with you girls," Charlotte pauses.

"So?"

"The only one to accept me is the one you and the others go to."

"And?"

"I want to know if it would be okay if I went there," Charlotte says.

"I guess," I say.

"Thanks, so how's it going?" Charlotte says.

"Great, but it's nice to have time to myself," I say pointedly.

"Yah, it can be nice to be alone, but sometimes it's really lonely."

"Not when you're always with a baby," I say pointedly.

"How is the baby? And your sister's back, how is she?"

"They're both great, actually I'm supposed to be meeting her, so I'm going to go," I say and swim out of the moon pool.

I don't swim back to shore though, instead I find a place to hide where I can see the entrance to the moon pool. When, ten minutes later, I see Charlotte swimming out, I head back to enjoy my time alone.

****At the cafÃ©****

****Emma's POV****

I was working before I have class tonight. I have been so busy that I haven't had time to talk to Ash about him leaving in a few weeks. I know that we still have time, but time flies.

Lost in my thoughts, I move about the cafÃ© clearing tables. Not long after I clean the last table, Melanie walks in.

"Hey Emma, you busy?"

"Well, I'm working, but it's slow so what do you need?" I ask.

"I know you're really busy, but I was wondering if you could help me with something," she says.

"Depends, what is it?"

"A project for school, it's for my astronomy class," Melanie says.

"When is it due?"

"The teacher wants me to do the speech the week before finals, so two weekend, I'll help," I say.

"Thanks."

****At the soon to be Bennett's****

****Rikki's POV****

"I'm going to get the mail," I yell to Zane as I step out of the door. I walk to the mail box, and take out the letters. Most were bills for both the cafÃ© and the house, but two were from school. One

was addressed to me, and the other Zane. Hmmâ€|.that's interesting.

I make sure that I have all the letters before heading back inside.

"Anything interesting?" Zane asks as he set James in the pay pen.

"We each got a letter from school," I say nonchantly.

"What do they say?" he asks.

"I haven't opened mine, and I can't legally open yours," I say.

He laughs. "In a little over two months we are going to be married. I'm not hiding anything from you, and I don't plan to, so you're welcome to open my mail."

"Alright, then. Here's yours," I say then open it.

_Dear Mr. Bennett, _

_We are writing to inform you that you have been invited to an exclusive opportunity to interview at several top businesses in the area. _

If you are interested in getting a head start, please contact your advisor.

_Sincerely yours, _

Head of Career services.

"That's great, Zane, congrats. Are you going to do it?" I ask as soon as I finish reading.

"Do I really need to? I mean, we already own the cafÃ©. Dad plans to sign over the rights as soon as we get married. Why work for some one when we can work for ourselves," he says.

"You don't think it would be good to make connections?"

"I don't think that we can't make our own connections together as a pair. Anyway, why don't we read your letter," Zane says.

I set his letter on the table, and open mine.

_Dear Miss Chadwick, _

We are writing to inform you that you are currently failing your speech course, and in danger of failing two others. We regret to inform you that should you not raise your grades, we will have to put you on academic probation.

_We suggest that you contact at least one of the three tutors listed beliw for help. All three of your professors request that you make appointments with them to help plan a way for you to pass.

—

_Wishing you the best, _

Office of Registrar.

I read through it again to myself. I'm failing? And in danger of failing? How has this happened? What am I going to do?

"It's okay," Zane says.

"Is it? I know I didn't do well in school, but I've never failed," I say.

"You haven't failed yet, you just aren't doing well. You still have time," Zane tells me.

"There isn't much time, not unless I ignore the twins," I say.

"Not necessarily, we can figure it out," Zane says.

"How?"

"Let's start with talking to your speech teacher tonight, and the others tomorrow," Zane says.

"And I could call the tutors," I say sadly, I don't want to be tutored.

"I know that it's not what you want, but you need it, according to your teachers."

"I know."

****One week later- November 3****rd****, 2011****

****At the McCartney's****

****Lewis' POV****

I walked through the door after work, and I see Cleo sitting on the couch reading a letter.

"Hey honey, what's that?" I ask.

She looks down, and then at me. "Oh, it's nothing."

"Why are you lying to me?"

"Sorry, I just got a letter from school. My teachers decided that I shouldn't come back this semester. That it's too late. I've missed too much, too close to finals," she says.

"Oh, so what happens now?"

"Ummâ€¦well I'll get incompletes until I can finish. It's recommended that I try to finish in summer school. I'll have to make appointments with each professor in hopes of taking the class with other students over the summer. The letter says that there's a chance that I'd have to take private lessons until I can finish. The office of registrar said that only two of the classes are for sure going to be over the summer. The other three, they don't know," she tells me.

"Well, it'll be okay, just talk to your professors," I say.

"I guess. I just didn't want to spend this summer in school," Cleo says quietly.

"Well, you won't be the only one," I say.

"What do you mean?" she asks.

"I have been thinking of taking two classes over the summer," I say slowly.

"What? When did you decide this?"

"I thought that since I am taking less classes during the year I would take two summer classes."

"Uhâ€¦okay," she says.

"You aren't upset are you?" I ask.

"Well kind of, you didn't talk to me about it," Cleo says.

"Why does that matter?"

"We're married, Lewis, you should always talk to me about anything in our lives. Everything we do affects each other now."

"Oh, I'm sorry. I just didn't think about it," I say.

"Did you forget that we are married?"

"No I didn't. I just assumed that it would be okay. It's not like I'm moving," I say.

"You better not be."

"Okay, I'm sorry, is it okay if I take classes this summer. I'll still see you and Catherine way more often than during the year," I say.

"Yeah, it's fine. I just probably overreacted, sorry."

"It's okay. How was the rest of your day?"

****A few days later- Saturday November 6****th****

****At Emma and Ash's apartment ****

****About two o'clock****

****Ash's POV****

Starting to pack for going to Sydney in a few weeks, I hear a knock on the door, knowing that Emma's in the building's laundry room, I wonder who it is.

I walk quickly through the living room to the door. Peering through the peep hole, I see my older sister and my brother, Matt.

"Hey guys," I say as I open the door.

"Hey, we came to see our nieces," Lynn says.

"I told you to call before you stop by," I say.

"Why? Doing something you shouldn't?" Lynn asks.

"No, I'm just getting ready for my trip. I leave December 1st," I say.

"Which is practically a month away," Lynn says.

"Oh give him a break," Matt says.

"Fine, so where are my nieces?" Lynn asks.

"Not here. Emma's parents wanted some time with their grandchildren," I say.

"So? You just left them there?"

"Yes, they offered to babysit early so we can get things done before work," I say.

"I thought that you guys are friends with the owners of your work?"

"We are."

"Why would they schedule you for the same time?"

"They didn't. Someone called off, and I said I'd work. Even if we couldn't get a sitter, there's a play pen in the office and Zane or Rikki would be happy to accommodate us," I say.

"That's just weird."

"Do you want something?"

"No, just to bug you."

"Please leave, I have stuff to do," I say.

"Fine," they say as Emma comes in.

"Hi," she says.

"Hi," they say back.

"Would you like something to drink?" she asks.

"No, they were just leaving," I say.

"They don't have to leave, we can take a break. Besides, we still have time," Emma says looking at me. We've been avoiding talking about me leaving even if we are getting ready for it.

"No, it's okay. We don't want to be a bother. Let's go," Matt says.

Then he waves good bye as he grabs Lynn's arm and heads out the door.

It's quiet after they leave, Emma moves to the kitchen to make something to eat trying to seem busy.

I follow her into the kitchen, and say, "Emma."

"Hmmâ€| "

"We can't keep avoiding this."

"I'm not avoiding anything," Emma says.

I just look at her until she looks up.

"Okay, maybe I am," she says.

"Why? You know how important this is," I say.

"I knowâ€| it's just â€| I'm afraid," she says looking down.

"Why?"

"No matter what you say, there's always that chanceâ€| "

"It's a very slim chance, we shouldn't worry about it," I say.

"Really?"

"Yes, besides my family would never let me make that mistake again. I'm not going to leave you," I say and then pull her in for a hug.

"Thanks."

47. Summer's Here

Chapter 45: Summer's here

****Saturday, November 6****th****

****At the court house****

****3 o'clock PM****

****Rikki's POV****

Lizzie and I are in our dresses standing in front of the officiator. I'm next to our dad, and Lizzie moves to the door to walk our mom down the aisle. The music starts and Lizzie walks mom down the aisle.

Mom smiles at me and dad as they reach us. Mom faces dad and the ceremony begins. It was quick and simple since it was a remarriage and all they really needed was their family.

Before we knew it, the wedding was over and our parents were driving away for the weekend.

Lizzie and I waved to them until disappeared, and then turned to go back to the house. She had planned to come back and see the twins. Now that they were officially a family again, she wanted to make sure that she made it clear that she would be around for them.

We made it back to the house in no time, and as we walked in, the twins were crawling across the living room.

"Hey babies, I'm home," I say bending down so they will come over to me.

Suddenly, James stands up and just starts taking slow steps towards me. I reach my arms out to catch him as he gets closer.

"You walked! Good job, James," I say and then look up to see the smile on Zane's face.

Everyone started clapping until Maria pulled on Zane's pant leg. Zane looked down at her and helped her stand up. She then looked from Zane to me and back again before taking a tentative step forward. Then another and before we knew it, Maria had walked across the room to Lizzie. All of us smiled and clapped.

The three of us sat on the floor in a triangle and spent the remainder of the afternoon helping the twins learn how to walk and practice walking between them.

It was a memorable evening for all of them.

****Three week later****

****November 27****th****, 2011****

****Ash's POV****

I leave in four days for my internship and I've been slowly packing. I'll be gone most of December and January, at least I can come back for Christmas and then again at wedding. Emma has been under a lot of stress lately, balancing her studies, the girls and work, but she seems to be doing a lot better since school ended. Finals have just finished and grades should be coming in soon, but until then Emma's likely to still be on edge.

Suddenly, the doorbell rings and Emma goes to get it. Peeking my head out of my room, I see that it's on my family coming to visit.

"Hey guys," I say as I come into the living room.

Everyone greets me, and Emma asks if anyone needs anything.

"So, what brings you all here?" I ask as Emma comes back in the room with drinks.

"Well, we'd just thought that we'd come by and visit before you'd left," my mother says.

"Yeah, you didn't think we'd let you leave without seeing us, did

you?" Lynn asks.

"No, I guess not," I say.

Just then the girls started crying. It was time for them to wake up from an afternoon nap.

Emma immediately gets up to get them, and my mother joins her. They come back and sit on the floor to play with them.

"Actually, we came here for another reason, too," Lynn says.

"And what's that?" I ask.

"Well, I was thinking that with you gone, Emma could use some help," Lynn says.

"And we could see the girls more," my mother adds.

"I think that's a great idea, but it's up to Emma as she'll be here alone," I say looking to Emma.

She pauses before saying, "Actually, Jenna's going to stay here and help out, but sure, we could always use more help and you guys have as much right to see the girls as my family does."

"That's great! What about the holiday? Will we get to see them over Christmas?" Lynn asks excitedly.

"Well, um I'm not really sure what the plan is with my family. Since we finally have the entire family together again, I think that they want to have Christmas, but I'm sure that we can do Christmas Eve or something," Emma says.

"We'll work something out, dear," my mother says.

"I'll only be in for the two days so we'll make it happen," I say.

"Good," my mother says

****Upstairs****

****Bella's apartment****

****Bella's POV****

Sophie and I were talking as we prepared lunch for us, Will and Ashley. She's been coming over frequently to see Ashley and talk about being a mermaid. Even though she feels differently than when she first turned.

"I'm still unsure about being a mermaid, I'd like to give it up sometimes, too," I say.

"Really?" Sophie asks.

"Sometimes, I mean truthfully life would be easier without it, but the experiences outweigh that most of the time," I say.

"I'm getting used t it, although it's still weird for me, but at least it's something I could use to bond with Ashley and other children in the family," Sophie says.

"Well, I'd hold off on that, just because sometimes I'm not sure I can handle this one, but at least I've gotten better at this being a mother thing," I say picking up Ashley as she crawls to me.

As Will walks in, he was getting the mail, he says, "You have visitors."

"Visitors?" I ask.

"Yes, Bella, it's Diana and Bethany," Will says.

I turn around to see them both in the doorway.

"May we come in?" Diana says politely.

"I suppose, we were just making sandwiches for lunch would you like some?" I ask hoping they'll say no.

"That would be nice, _right _Bethany?" Diana says strongly hinting that Bethany should agree with her.

"Yes, nice," Bethany says, but it is obvious that she would rather be anywhere else.

We finish making the food and sit on the couch, placing the sandwiches on the table in front of the couch next to some plates.

Everyone starts eating in silence, and I begin to wonder when they are going to tell me why they are here, when Diana finally breaks the silence.

"So, we came here because Christmas is in less than a month and mom's been writing us letters asking for forgivenessâ€|and well we thought Christmas would be a good start," Diana says.

"I'm not sure what you mean," I say although I have a feeling I know where she's going with this.

"I think we should have a dinner together as a family even though we aren't very close," Diana says looking hopeful.

I look to Will and Sophie for a way out of spending time with my family. I really don't think that I can spend Christmas with them. I'm just not ready to pretend everything is okay.

"I know that this might be difficult for you, but it is for all of us. We should at least try," Diana says obviously picking up on the fact that I was looking for a way out.

"I don't knowâ€|" I say despite her efforts.

"Look Bella, I'm not keen on this idea either, but maybe it would be nice and you wouldn't have to cook or be alone for the holiday," Bethany says, and I look at her strangely, who was she to tell me I would be alone on the holiday.

"I suppose it couldn't hurt to go," I say, even though I'd rather not, then ask, "How long will you be staying here on the Gold coast?"

Diana smiles and says, "Until just passed the holidays for sure, I might stay longer if things go well, but thanks for agreeing to come."

"It's no problem," I say nodding.

"Well then, we best be off," Bethany says, she must be in a hurry.

"Thanks for everything, Bella, and if you want to get together sooner, I'd love to meet you for a drink," Diana says as they get up.

"No problem and maybe. Have a nice night," I say as they leave.

"So, maybe we can do Christmas eve with my parents?" Will asks.

"Sounds great," I say even though it really isn't that great.

****Sunday, November 28, 2011****

****At the McCartney's ****

****Cleo's POV****

I'm getting Catherine ready to go to my dad's house for a family day together. It's been odd since my mom came back to town. Especially after hearing the things she thought about Kelly and essentially me for being mermaids. At least it's the one day I get to spend with Lewis. Even though classes are over for a few days before summer classes begin.

In a few days the summer term will begin and it'll get all super busy again. I'm hoping that I'll manage to find some time to be with my family.

"Cleo? Are you ready?" Lewis says breaking into my thoughts.

I nod and we head out to my dad's place. In ten minutes, we're walking through the front door, and the family day begins.

I place Catherine on a blanket on the floor, and I sit on the floor next to her. I start talking to Sam and Kim about school and having to take summer courses.

"School's interesting and all, but I'm curious, how did you become a mermaid? Both of you? All you told us was that it was a full moon and there was a pool in a volcano, but how did you end up there?" Sam asks.

"Rikki stole Zane's spark plug, so I got sucked into standing in the boat that he pushed off. She saved me, and we took a ride, found Emma and ended up stalling way off shore. We paddled to Mako, where Emma

wanted to climb higher for reception. After some time, we reached a little jump, where I ended up falling down. We found the pool and had to swim through it," I say.

"Mine was similar, except that Bethany intentionally brought us to the moon pool, she wanted to be a mermaid, and she thought that she had to have two others with her, so she dragged me and Diana with her, even though we were four years old," Kelly says looking upset as she finishes.

I give Kelly a reassuring smile as our mother asks, "How did you react to it?"

"Better than you did," Kelly mutters, and then we both answer, "I didn't like it."

"Really?" Kim asks.

"You know that I was afraid of water, being a mermaid didn't change that," I say.

"I was young, and didn't like that I couldn't play in the bathtub or at the water park or beach because water changed who I was, who I am. I now had this secret that I could never share without being sure that I wouldn't be treated like an animal. Bethany taught us from a young age that we were never to share our secret. She told us that it wasn't a gift like we wanted it to be because we were kicked out of the family just for this "gift" we had."

When she finishes, everyone grows quiet before our mother answers, "I'm sorry, I know saying that could never change the past, but I want to make it up to you, just tell me how."

Kelly bites her lip before, nodding and saying, "I'll let you know."

****Wednesday, December 1****st****, 2011 ****

****Emma's POV****

I watch as Ash puts his suitcases into the trunk of the car. He starts his internship tomorrow, but has to go in tonight for orientation, plus having to acclimate to his temporary apartment for the summer. My sister is inside watching the girls, in case I need to help Ash as he prepares to leave.

"Are you all set?" I ask as closes the trunk.

"Yeah, I think I just have to say good bye," he says looking at the doorway and then at me.

"That's all?" I ask sadly, hoping to put off the inevitable good bye.

"I'll say goodbye to the twins first," Ash says walking passed me and into the apartment.

I follow him and watch as he hugs and kisses each baby and turns to shake Jenna's hand as he doesn't know her that well. Then he turns to me, "Do you want to take this outside?"

I nod.

We walk outside and he wraps his arms around me. "It's only two months. And you'll see me for Christmas and the wedding," he says with a laugh.

I laugh softly and say, "Yeah, I suppose."

"It'll be alright, technology these days will really help us. I'll be back before you know it," Ash says.

He leans down to kiss me, and then hugs me tightly, whispering in my ear, "I love you, be back soon."

"I love you too," I say as we pull apart and he goes to get in the car.

I wave at him until I can't see him anymore, before I head inside.

****A while later****

There's a knock on the door, and I move to answer it.

It's Bella. "Hey, the mail came and guess what's in it?"

"What's in it?" I ask.

She shakes her head. "I said guess."

I just stare at her. "Just tell me."

"Our final grades," she says excitedly.

I narrow my eyes. "Why are you excited about those, weren't you afraid that you were failing?"

"Yes, I was on probation because I was failing, but I passed, and I wanted to see how amazing you most likely did. I passed all the classes that I finished and that is what matters. Anyway, want to go celebrate? It's the first day of summer!"

I give her this 'are you serious' look, and she says, "What?"

"I have twins to take care of, you have a daughter, and I don't even know if I did well enough to celebrate."

"Of course you did, your Emma."

"You're ignoring the other two statements. We have kids."

"Will has Ashley for the day, and I'm sure your sister would be willing to watch the girls, right Jenna."

Jenna looks up from her book, and replies, "Sure, why not? I'm staying here to help out anyway, right?"

"See," Bella says smiling.

"I still don't know!"

"Just open the letter,"

"Fine, Fine, I'll do it," I say as I open the envelope.

I quickly read just the letter grades, and I smile as I realize I did do well getting all A's despite not having as much time as before because of the twins.

"How'd you do?" Bella asks.

"I got straight A's," I say smiling.

"See! I knew it! Now let's go celebrate!"

I turn to Jenna, "Are you sure?"

"Go have fun, just let me know when you're heading back."

"Thanks, sis," I say as we turn to leave headed for the café.

****At the café****

****Zane's POV****

I've been working on these plans for a week now, but I haven't told Rikki that I want to expand the café. I know that the summer is the busiest time of the year for us, so the expedition can't happen until after summer, but the plans should start now.

I wonder how Rikki will react to wanting to expand, it'll be a lot of work and possibly stress on our upcoming marriage. I stop working as I start to think about our wedding and marriage. I can't believe that last year, this wouldn't have even been possible. This time last year, we were broken up and quite hostile towards each other. I thought I'd never get her back. She hadn't known about the twins when we started going back out. What if she found out before? Would I have treated her like she was trapping me? I don't know. Looking back on it, I don't think so, but I'm different now. Could I have? I was surprised when Ash did. If he could do that, could I have? Would I have?

My thoughts broke as I could hear Rikki's voice saying, "Now that they are officially remarried, we'll be an official family again. We should have a family Christmas, maybe invite our new found cousins?"

I look up just as she walks in with James in her arms.

"Hey Zane, what are you doing?" she asks.

"Actually, something I wanted to talk to you about," I say getting up and walking towards her. "Hey, buddy," I say as I grab James from her.

"There's something you want to show me?" she asks,

"Yeah, it's about the café."

"Is something wrong?"

"Maybe I should leave?" Lizzie asks as she put down Maria in the play pen.

"Well, it should be owners meeting before we tell the employees," I say.

Lizzie nods and leaves the room. Rikki sits down, and we hear Lizzie yell a greeting to Emma and Bella.

"So, what is it?"

I put James into the play pen, and then laid out all the plans and started explaining.

"I want to expand the café, maybe just the outside or something. I also thought that maybe we could build another café elsewhere," I say.

"Build another café? Wouldn't that be a bit much? When would we do this?"

"It'd start after the summer and maybe, if we do well, we could look at other locations. I want to see if we can expand this place first. Then look into building another one not far from here," I say.

"I don't think we could afford another building right now, not to mention finding the time to get everything settled in a new town with us here."

"That would be the next step. I meant that we start expanding the building first, and then consider building a new one."

"Can we afford that? Wouldn't we have to close down to do that?"

"It gets slow at the end of the summer. A few weeks of effort and we will have it. Besides, maybe we could avoid closing down?"

"Well, these plans look pretty good, but maybe we should talk to your father? He will, after all, need to agree since he bought this place."

"Okay, we can talk to my dad first."

"It's just because he's practically our banker."

"I know."

"Let's take a break. It is the first day of summer."

"Yup, let's take the kids out to enjoy it. Summer's here."

A/n hey guys, it's been awhile. I'm sorry for the hiatus. I found some motivation so I hope it won't be too long but As strange as it is, I still can't guarantee the next update, but I am trying because I really do want to finish. Thanks for sticking with me, and have a great day.

48. The Holidays

Chapter 46: The Holidays

****Two Weeks Later****

****December 14****th****, 2011****

****Emma's POV****

The time has flown by in the last two weeks. Jenna has really made things easier, we have finally fallen into a routine with the girls. She and I alternate taking care of them, even though she's just supposed to be here as a precaution in case I need her. Having her here has made things so much better and easier for me, and we've finally found the time to really get to know one another.

"Are the girls ready?" Jenna asks.

"Yes," I yell back. We are meeting our "cousins", which is still weird to think about, and makes me think it is not real, Rikki and Lizzie at the caf  .

"Then let's go," Jenna says. She puts Lily-Anne in stroller, and I put Rosemary in my stroller. We start walking in silence before Jenna breaks it.

"You know, I think I had it better than Kelly. At least, I had my aunt, a family member that was less likely to throw me out on my own. Kelly was always worried that Bethany would throw her out and tell her to never come back. I didn't have to worry."

"Why would she believe that?"

"Bethany wasn't family; she didn't owe anything to Kelly. Kelly was just some kid that Bethany had to take care of because Bethany had helped ruin her life. Even though it was Bethany's fault, Bethany did consider giving them away. She was young, on her own and thought more of every man for themselves. It didn't that they were practically babies all she cared about was herself. She was a teenager, and she has just been sent across the world by her parents with two kids and told never to speak to them again. What would you have done?"

"I would've stuck with them. They would be all I had left," I say.

"She doesn't always think clearly, even now."

"Well, at least everything's better now," I say.

"Is it? Nothing will ever be alright with them. I don't think anything they've been through is acceptable. I don't think it's something they can ever get over," Jenna says shaking her head.

There's silence that surrounds us. We walk for several minutes before we reach the caf  . I push Rosemary into the caf   first, and spot Rikki and Lizzie with Rikki's twins in their laps. I walk over to them and take Rosemary in my arms and slide into the booth across from Rikki. Jenna does the same and slides in next to me.

"Hey, you made it," Rikki says with a smile.

"Yeah, did you think we wouldn't," I tease.

"You never know, anyways, there's I reason I asked you both here," Rikki says.

"Ok, well spill it."

"I want to have Christmas dinner, at our house, with you guys and your parents and Eliot, of course, and our parents and Zane's dad. The whole family, really."

"Since when have you ever cared about family? Didn't you used to make fun of my "perfect" little family," I say upset because that was exactly what she did at every opportunity.

Rikki's smile turns into a frown. "Emma, can I talk to you outside?"

I nod, and Jenna gets up to let me out of the booth as does Lizzie for Rikki. I place Rosemary in her stroller, and Rikki does the same, then I follow her outside.

As soon as she turns around, Rikki asks, "Why do you have to question me? Why can't you just go with it?"

"Because it's true, in the years that I've known you, you never cared for a family, and when have I ever just went with you without questioning you."

"Yes, I did. I just hid it well."

"Rikki, I think I know you by now," I say, it has been three and half years since I met her.

"You know me? You think you know me? Emma, you have no idea who I am, if you think family means nothing to me. I made fun of your family because I always wanted one; it was only me and dad against the world. He was all I had, and I pretended that it was okay, but as I loved him, I always wanted more. I made fun of 'happy, perfect families' was my front for not showing my pain. If you knew me at all, you would have known that I don't show my feelings. Anyways, despite the fact that my dad and I were happy just the two of us, finding out that I have more family members that I had no idea about or some that wouldn't admit that I was related, and now that they are around, I will do anything to be like the family we should be. To be like the family, I thought yours was."

I'm shocked as she finishes speaking. I thought I knew her after all the time and secrets we have shared, but I'm realizing that maybe I don't know her at all. I should have known that I really didn't know her, after all it took a year and a half to find out where she lived and we spent practically every day together. After I came back, and we found out the truth about us, all this time I never really acknowledge a change in our relationship, has she been upset with me and my family all this time?

"We're best friends, how did I not know that you've been so upset

with my family for months?"

"You didn't realize because if you think about it, all we've ever talked about has involved our secret or school or the café. But we never really talked about anything deeper. But we are getting off topic here, all I want is my first real family Christmas with everyone coming over and being a normal family, but if you don't want that, if that's not what you want then I'll exclude my cousins."

I look at her and I can see how much this means to her.

"I'm sorry for reacting that way. I would love to spend the holiday at your place."

"Thank you, I'm sorry for yelling. Let's go back inside and plan our family Christmas."

I nod and we head back in.

****Three days later****

****At the mall****

****Rikki's POV****

Christmas is approaching and I have most of the presents except my sister's and parent's. Even though there's some tension between Emma and me, I asked her, Bella and Cleo to come shopping for my remaining presents. Only Bella was able to make it.

"Do you have a lot of presents still to go?" I ask Bella, in a hope to start a conversation.

"That depends."

"On what?"

"Whether or not I should buy for a mother who thinks I'm a creature, an older sister who was stupid enough to tell the family what she did to herself and mad at me because I was smarter than that, and a twin sister who's upset that I never bothered to try to talk to her. Three of the four people I'm having Christmas with have issues with me. What do you buy for people you'd rather ignore?"

Throughout her explanation, I turn to stare at her. She doesn't look saddened by her family situation instead she looks hardened like she wished she was on her own without a family.

Bella looks at me, and says, "What?"

"Why do you seem like you can't stand your family, like her don't want a family?"

"Sometimes, blood doesn't make family."

I just look after strangely, and she responds by saying, "These last two years have been the only time I've felt like I've had a family, and it wasn't my parents or sisters that made me feel like that, it was you and Cleo, then Will and Lewis, and even Zane a little bit. My friends have been a better family to me than my parents and sisters

will ever hope to be."

"Really? You actually believe we've been a better family to you?"

"Yes."

"Oh Bella, I'm sorry. I've been so wrapped up in getting my family back and actually having a family this Christmas that I forgot about my pseudo family. I mean, I guessed we've all been wrapped up in our own worlds."

"Yeah, well you all lucked out," Bella says shrugging.

"Hey," I say reaching to her, "I know you have to see your family and Will's on the Christmas eve and day, but what if just you, me, Cleo and Emma go for a swim the day after Christmas and celebrate as our family of mermaids?"

"Just the four of us? No other mermaids or family members?"

"No one else, just us. We can have a belated Christmas picnic," I say.

"Okay," Bella says nodding.

"Good, and I'm sure the others weren't meaning to do it either."

"I know it's just that now that it isn't a secret, and there's all these all mermaids, it just feels like there's nothing holding us together anymore."

"Well, we're still best friends and now that we've got kids, school and work it's hard to find time for each other and Cleo and Emma. I mean, when was the last time we went for a swim?"

"You're right. Why don't we skip the mall and go for a swim?"

I look around and glance at some stores I wanted to go into and think about the gifts I need to buy, but one look at Bella's eager look, and I say, "Why not?"

The two of us then start running out of the mall and towards the ocean. What a sight we probably made.

****One week later, Christmas Eve****

****The McCartney's home****

****Cleo's POV****

The house was decorated, the presents under the tree and I had three days off from school for the holiday. Lewis was on the phone while I played with Catherine.

Suddenly, he got off the phone and came into the living room. He looks bothered and unsure.

"Who was that?" I ask.

"My mom."

"Well, what did she say?"

"She can't make dinner tonight, the oven/ stove broke."

"Aww, that's too bad. What are we going to do then?"

"She wanted to know if my family could come to your dad's place for Christmas dinner tomorrow."

"Uh, you want to add six people to dinner?"

"Well, yeah, but it should be okay."

"I guess I could ask," I say and get up to hand Catherine to Lewis before grabbing my phone and dialing my dad's number.

The phone rings several times before my dad picks up.

"Hello," he says.

"Hey, dad, it's Cleo."

"Cleo! How's it going?"

"Uh, good, I have a question tomorrow."

"Dinner starts at three, so we'd have plenty of time for presents after."

"No, that's not what I was going to ask."

"Okay, well what is it?"

"Do you think it would be okay if Lewis' parents and brothers come to dinner tomorrow?"

"Well, um, I guess that would be okay, we do have plenty of food."

"Thanks, dad, that really means a lot."

"No problem."

"I'll see you tomorrow, and Merry Christmas Eve."

****At Will's Parent's house ****

****Will's POV****

Dinner has been over for some time, and yet Bella still looks comfortable. She looks more at home than I am, talking with Sophie and watching as my mom plays with Ashley.

"So, now that the girls are occupied, I can ask you, how are you and Bella doing as parents and in general?" My dad asks.

I just look at him for a second, before thinking about Bella and I's relationship. I sighed and then answered him. "It's been pretty back

and forth, great together some days, but most days it's a struggle. I'm just so confused about my life, my feelings, right now. I know that I thought I was in love with her, but the baby has complicated things. I love them, but how much of that is forced because of what happened. I can't walk away from them, and I will always have to deal with Bella, and that complicates my feelings. Do I love her? It's possible, it's just that it was so soon into our relationship that a wrench was thrown into it. I'm confused."

"Why are you confused? Try to explain it to me, give me more to work with," my dad says, and I bite my lip as I think about it, hmm how to explain.

"I liked and was interested in Bella from the first time I saw her. She was interesting and mysterious in every way, part of that was her secret of course. I know that we rushed into things, and at the time it was just teenagers being teenagers. I didn't know if I loved her, liked her, or just liked her because of her interesting secrets. It all happened so fast, I want to believe that I do love her, but with everything else, I just feel pushed to love her and make things permanent like every other teen parents. That's just it, in a few days, we went from teenagers in love acting stupid and careless, the next everything just changed and with it, my feelings confused. It wasn't part of the plan, but then who would plan this. Don't get me wrong, Ashley may have been a surprise, but once she came into my life, I fell in love with her, but that doesn't mean I'm in love with her mother. Ever since she was born, Bella and I have been on the rocks. We're new at this, but it's more than that, we've been trying, but struggling so much we're nearly failing. Every one of our friends is doing so much better than me and Bella. Maybe it is because of passing her back and forth because we are unsure of our feelings, and I do mean our. I'm not the only one who has mixed feelings about our relationship. Right now, barely seeing each other and only to pass her between us has us acting like old divorcees. It's just we aren't acting like we are even in a relationship, and it's hard to discern whether I care about Bella and Ashley now because I have to or because I want to." I know that I was rambling through most of my short little speech, but as I look to my dad, he must've understood something.

"I had a feeling that was the case. I could tell that this back and forth is hurting your relationship with Bella."

I shake my head. "It's just confusing because it's not like we could back up time to just the two of us."

My dad looks over at my mom with Ashley and says, "After your friends' wedding, you and Bella can go to this bad and breakfast for the weekend. Your mom and I will watch over Ashley."

"Why would you do that?"

"Because it's not easy to go from boyfriend and girlfriend to parents. You could use some time alone so you could reevaluate your relationship."

"You really think so?"

"It can't hurt."

"Thanks, dad."

****At Ash's parents' house****

****Ash's POV****

It was so nice to be with my family again. Everyone was anxious to talk to me about my internship, which is going great. Since I only get today, and tomorrow before I have to head back on the 26th, Emma and I won't get a lot of time alone together. She seems bothered by it, but I tried to make her feel better by reminding her that we've talked every night, that I'll be back before she knows it, but she's still obviously bothered.

That's why I bought her the Christmas present that should show her I am serious about her. A promise ring and a puppy. I thought that adopting the black lab would show I am serious. I hope that she accepts it as the truth.

****Christmas morning****

****Zane's POV****

"Merry Christmas," I say as I walk down the stairs.

"Hey, sleepy head," I hear coming from the kitchen.

"It's not that late," I say looking at the clock which reads 11 A.M..

"It is when we are hosting a dinner here is four hours and have to make it."

"I thought that the others were helping out. What happened to your mom and sister helping?"

"They're on their way, but you should help too."

"Okay, okay. I'm here to help now."

"Good."

Then the two of us get to work on making a Christmas dinner with all sorts of foods.

Before long, the kitchen was full of people and some serious messes were being made.

At least it was the most fun anyone could have making a holiday dinner for their combined family.

At three o'clock, the table was full of food and the family surrounding it.

"Before we eat I would just like to toast to our first Christmas together as a family," I say raising a glass.

Everyone raised their glasses with me, and said, "Cheers."

****At Cleo's dad's house****

****Lewis' POV****

This was our first Christmas as a married couple and a family. It was a good thing that we ended up sharing the holiday with both sides of the family. It was so nice for our family to be together. It was the first time since we got married, and it would appear that we need to do it more often.

Everything went well throughout dinner, although it was kind of awkward when Cleo's mom asked about Cleo and Kelly's adventures under the water. My family knows about Cleo's mermaidness, but we never really talk about it. Hearing the stories about them swimming made my mom curious. She asked all sorts of random questions, but then there was an accident resulting Cleo, Kelly and Catherine getting wet.

It lead to questions about the colors in the tails, and how everyone's were different, and if every child Cleo has will have a purple tail. That led to explaining that boys won't and what we have learned from Rikki and Melanie that will affect any sons we have. We hadn't told my family about it, mainly because until we have a son, we didn't see the need to worry them.

My mom flipped because she didn't care that it wasn't in effect yet, it was a matter of not knowing if we would tell them right away or wait until our future son's fifteenth birthday. I told her that we would just have to cross the bridge the next time Cleo is pregnant with a boy. She relaxed, as did the rest of the family, and the rest of the holiday went without a hitch. Before the girls changed back, I took the first photo of the three of them as mermaids.

****December 26****th****, 2011****

****No POV****

The Bennett twins were being watched by their grandpa Bennett as their father goes to set up a picnic for the four mermaids that would be picnicking together.

While Zane was setting up, Rikki was gliding through the water and enjoying her slow swim to Mako Island. As she continued to swim slowly to the Island, suddenly she saw a flash of blue and green zoom by her.

It was obvious that it was Bella and Emma, so Rikki then picked up speed as she saw Cleo behind, so she headed her way.

Before long, the four of them were sitting in the pool admiring the picnic that Zane had set up. There was a small Christmas tree with the presents the girls had gotten each other.

"This is great," Bella exclaims obviously happy.

Cleo and Emma also exclaimed that the cavern looked great. Rikki then helped everyone dry off so they could enjoy the meal.

Cleo told the girls about her Christmas including the beautiful charm bracelet that Lewis has gotten her. It was a nice story.

Emma and Rikki shared they're story. How nice though slightly awkward

it was that Emma's mom acted strange when the mermaid topic came up. They focused on their presents or mainly Emma's gift of a promise ring and an adorable puppy they all promised to visit soon.

Then Bella outdid them all. She told them how her Christmas was beyond awkward. It was difficult to keep a conversation and all through dinner Bella kept hoping there would be some emergency. After it was over, Will gave her the present his parents had given to him for the two of them: a weekend getaway.

****A/N Thanks for reading, hope you liked it. Here's September's update, see you in October for sure, but possibly sooner.****

49. New Year

Chapter 47: New Year

****New Year's Eve****

****At the cafÃ©****

****Bella's POV****

I'm so ready for a new year, even if it means I have to spend the night working and watching over Ashley while I'm on stage.

This year has been such a test on patience that I've wanted to just run away. I never did because it wouldn't change anything, but now it's time to start a new.

A few days after Christmas, I got a call from my sister, Diana. I almost ignored it, but decided not to. I'm glad that I didn't, she called because she wanted to start over. It was a rough year for both of us and since we can't change our past. Since Will and Sophie are so big on family, I decided to give Diana a shot. New Year's is about new beginnings. Maybe I might get a better year this year.

I look at my phone and yell to the guys, "Our break time is over, let's practice some more."

****At the McCartney's home****

****Lewis' POV****

I was standing by the stairs with Catherine in my arms as I wait for Cleo to get ready for the party at the cafÃ©. Since it isn't a bar, we can bring Catherine and not have to worry too much.

Two thousand and eleven has been full of surprises: some good, some bad, but hopefully twenty twelve will be all good.

"Come on, Cleo, at this rate we won't be there until next year," I yell up the stairs.

"I'm coming! You know it takes me a while because of my tail!"

"I'm sure you'll be the most beautiful girl at the party, now come on."

Cleo walks down the stairs in her new purple sundress her mother bought for her, and I was right: she looks beautiful.

"You look beautiful just like I thought."

"Thanks, sorry it took so long. Sometimes I forget and wash the make off my hands resulting in my tail."

You'd think the girls will have learned by now. "That reminds me," I say as we leave the house, "I've been meaning to ask you. Didn't you learn to control your transformation?"

"I did, but it takes so much concentration that when I get startled, I forget about it."

"Would you like to do it without thinking like when you use your power to deflect water?"

"I suppose, but years of running when it happens won't suddenly disappear."

"What if I make it my new year's resolution to continually test you until you do it without thinking."

Cleo looks at me strangely, like I've gone insane or something.

"Think about it: practice makes perfect."

She smiles and nods. "Okay, I guess with your help that I will be able to actually do it without thinking."

"Good, now let's hurry before the New Year begins without us."

****At the cafÃ©****

****Ten minute to midnight****

****Emma's POV****

I'm sitting at the largest booth with my girls, sister and the rest of my friends. In ten minutes this year will be over. I can't believe all that has happened this year. I came back to the Gold Coast, found out I was pregnant, me and Ash went back and forth all year, I moved out, my secret was exposed, and had the girls. So many things happened both good and bad and as I look at my girls, I'm reminded of Ash. He couldn't be here tonight, but I'll see him soon. He's coming in on Wednesday to prepare before the wedding on Thursday.

Ash and I have been through a rough year, although I want to say that it is mostly his fault, but it isn't. I could've said no, but I didn't and I was willing to take care and love the girls without him. The last few weeks has made me miss him more than I thought I would.

I really thought that it would take me a lot longer to forgive him after he's left me multiple times this past year, but over the few weeks, I've been considering it. Maybe we should just start over, clean slate. I look at my twins again and smile.

What better time to start clean than in a completely new year. Just as I decide on starting a new with Ash, Bella comes off the stage with the cordless mic in her hand.

"Gather around everyone! It's almost midnight and it's time to count down into a New Year," Bella says.

The rest of us move together and grab a glass just as she begins.

"10€|9€|8"

The crowd starts to shout with her.

"7€|6€|5€|4€|3€|2€|1"

"Happy New Year!"

Everyone's shouting, yelling, and kissing as 2012 begins.

My friends and I clink our glasses together in our own private celebration and all I can think as I smile at them is that I hope it's better than the last.

****Thursday, January 5****th****, 2012****

****At Cleo's cottage****

****Rikki's POV****

Last night we dubbed Cleo and Lewis' place as Cleo's cottage and kicked the guys out for the night. We did this because we decided that we would spend the night before our wedding sleeping apart. We thought it would make tonight more special. So, the girls and I stayed here and the boys went to my house with the kids.

The night went by fast, and now I find myself sitting in a chair as Bella does my hair.

Cleo, Emma and Lizzie are getting ready across the room with quiet conversation as music plays softly.

"Are you nervous?" Cleo asks me as their conversation ends.

I pause before I answer. Am I nervous? I don't know. We already live together. We have twin and act like the family we are. Honestly, getting married really only makes it official and makes the people who already look down at me for getting pregnant so young, look a little less down. But we aren't doing this for them, we're doing it for us and I love Zane and our kid. So, no I don't think I have any reason to be nervous.

"No," I answer.

"Really?" Emma asks.

"Yes, why," I ask.

"Well, you and Zane haven't exactly had the easiest relationship," Emma answers.

I'm taken aback by her answer. It's true that though things have been rough before, things are easy now. Ever since I told him I was pregnant, things have gotten way better. We don't seem to fight and he's been very caring and loving. Our relationship has seemed really easy in the past year.

"Maybe in the past, but not since I told him I was pregnant. Things have gotten much better over the past year, and I have no real reason to be nervous to marry him," I say.

Emma smiles and says, "Okay, just checking."

I smile back and we all finish getting ready. As soon as we are done, my mom comes in to tell us that she is ready to drive us to the café.

"All ready?" she asks.

"Yes," we answer. Then we all get up and head for the van my mom'll be driving us in.

It didn't take long to reach the café, where we hurried inside so that Zane wouldn't see me in my dress.

The final preparations were finished and we even did some pictures just me and the girls. Suddenly, as we were taking more pictures, separate pictures of me with each girl, the guys and my dad come into the café.

"Everyone's ready, are you?" my dad asks.

I look around to the other girls checking to see if they were ready. They are, so I nod and smile at my dad. My mom goes to start the music and we all line up. Emma and Ash, Bella and Will, Cleo and Lewis, Lizzie by herself since Nate is standing at the end of the aisle with Zane, then my father and I. The music starts and the wedding starts. The aisle was short, so in no time at all, my dad and I reach the doorway that leads to the aisle. This is it.

****Zane's POV****

I stand at the end of the aisle with Nate as my best man and wait for the ceremony to begin. As guys, we didn't take long to get ready, so I've had some time to wait.

We mindlessly chatter until Nate asks, "Are you ready for this?"

I glance at him and think about all those times before I knew the truth that I interacted with Rikki. At first, we hated each other probably because she thought I was just some rich snob that got everything. It didn't help the way I acted with Mirium and Nate, like I owned the world.

I remember when she was the only one who hadn't laughed at Lewis' movie, how she told me that believed the sharks were there. After I found out her secret, she explained that she was the one that scared them away, but she would've believed me anyway. We had our first moment that night. It was the first time that I saw a different part of Rikki, a part I liked.

Then we got stuck on that balcony and then really connected. She made me relax and overcome my fear. After I opened my eyes and I realized that I could and would survive because of her, I knew that I had to give her a chance. I had to look passed her tough exterior and get to know.

I'll never forget that day when we were stuck on the balcony. We learned how much we had in common and I fell in love with her. By the time the first drops fell and she rushed to be in the safe dry place, I knew I was a goner. I wouldn't admit it, but it was the best day of my life at the time.

Our first kiss was amazing and I wanted more. I even gave up my search for the creature that saved me just to be with her. In hindsight, I should have realized she knew more about it then she let on, but I didn't care. All I wanted was a chance to be with her. It was the first time I chose a girl over proving I am right.

When I found out she was a mermaid, I was excited and relieved, but also betrayed. I understood why she didn't tell me, but it still hurt. For months I thought I might have been insane, and she could've confirmed it for me.

It didn't matter, that was our first break up, but at least it was on peaceful terms. I thought it was for the best, and I was okay while I was gone, but the second I saw her again, I knew I wanted to try again.

After her accretion that we would never be together, I lost all hope until Nate forced her secret out and I proved to her that I could do it, that we could be a great couple again. Things were great from then on with the exception of the fight with her dad.

I felt so bad that she thought I would give up on her because she wasn't rich like I was as if that was what helps our relationship together. After that, things were near perfect until I screwed it up with Sophie. But I was sorry and we got back together after a while and had the twins.

Regardless of how we got here, I'm happy that for whatever reason, the twins happened and led to us getting married. Any other teenage male would have found a way to get out of responsibilities like children, but not me. I knew that the twins would hold us together. We'd always have to deal with each other, which meant that even if she stopped us dating, I'd have plenty of time to convince her that we were and are meant to be.

I smile as the guys except Nate rush to the caf   in preparation of the ceremony to start.

"Are you nervous?" Nate asks.

"Not even a little," I say just as Rikki's mom tells us to start the ceremony.

Facing the front, I see Emma and Ash walking my way and parting in front of me, Ash next to Nate and Emma leaving the spot open for Rikki when she would get to the end of the aisle. Before I knew it, I was standing with Emma, Bella, Cleo, and Lizzie across from me and Nate, Ash, Will and Lewis behind me.

The traditional wedding song for when the bride walks down the aisle starts playing and my eyes fall to Rikki and her father walk down the aisle. I feel like my heart stops for a second at how beautiful she looks and knowing in a short time, she'll be mine forever.

She reaches me in not time, and kisses her father on the cheek and he shakes my hand before going to sit down. I help her hands in my own and I stare into her eyes and I get lost in them. The officiator starts with his usual ceremony stuff, but I don't pay attention. All I care about is the part that will make us Husband and wife.

Finally, the time comes and we say I do before giving each other over rings and sealing it with a kiss.

****At the reception****

****Cleo's POV****

Rikki and Zane wait outside while their guests enter the caf  . Once everyone else is inside, Bella grabs the mic from the starts and says, "Let's welcome the brand new couple: Mr. and Mrs. Zane Bennett."

Everyone claps and cheers. We all smile until they sit at the head table and all the guests sit at their tables so that the dinners could begin. It was a nice simple meal since there were few guests invited, and it was the caf  .

It was nice that the ten of us got to sit together as the wedding party.

"Well, at least this wedding didn't get ruined by sprinklers," I say remembering what happened at Sam and my dad's first wedding.

The new Bennett's, Bell and Will all laughed, but the rest looked confused.

"The last time we has a wedding here, it was Sam and Don's," Zane says.

"And Kim, who didn't want it to happen, set off sprinklers," Rikki finishes.

"The wedding got moved to Mako and it was all fixed," I say.

"Well, cheers to not having to turn into a mermaid on my wedding day," Rikki says lifting a glass.

We all toast to that before continuing to talk about all sorts of things. It was a wonderful meal until it was time for the toasts. Since traditionally it's the maid of honor and best man, it's different for this wedding. Rikki wants me to make a toast because I'm the only one who's been around for their entire relationship. All the up and downs and everything.

Nate looks at me and I nod to him to go first, so that I will have the time to organize my thoughts and make this speech great.

"Attention everyone, it is time to toast the happy new couple. As the best man, I would make a toast to the couple but I am more than that. I've been Zane's best friend since we were children and now he has children and now he has children of his own. I always thought that Rikki and Zane were too hot headed to last as a relationship, but that changed when he came back from boarding school. I saw what he did when he covered for her and though I didn't know why, I knew that he could put aside his pride for her. He grew up for her. Congrats, To Rikki and Zane."

Everyone claps and cheers. Once it settles down it becomes my turn.

"Well, I may not be the maid of honor, but I have been here for everything Zane and Rikki have gone through. Nothing describes their relationship more than the moment that Zane came to Emma and me and gave up their secret relationship just to make sure she was okay. We knew that he loved her and wouldn't be giving up anytime soon. There's never been a better match, take care of her Zane, To Zane and Rikki!"

The cheers and claps fill the room.

A/N Thanks for reading, hope it was good. Hey guys, sorry it was a bit late, I'm starting to fall behind again, but promise to have a chapter up in November.

50. Summer's Fades

Chapter 48: Summer Fades

A few weeks later

Zane's POV

This honeymoon has been great so far. Fiji is a wonderful country with lots of things to see and places to relax. Rikki wanted me to go diving with her while we're here so today we got on a boat with six other visiting people to scuba dive.

We told the instructors that Rikki doesn't need the equipment, but they brought her some anyway. They probably wouldn't believe the truth until they see it. So, as the boat's gliding along to our dive spot, Rikki says jokingly, "I can swim faster than this."

Before I can respond, another woman on the boat says, "Wow, you must be really full of yourself to think you're faster than a boat." She scoffs.

"I don't think it, I know it," Rikki says with a smile.

"That's not possible," the woman says angrily.

"Oh trust me, it is and you'll see. Besides who are you to invite yourself into our conversation," Rikki says.

I place my hand on her shoulder to calm her down so that it wouldn't ruin our day. Rikki looks at me and then at her before just smiling

and turning back to look at the water.

The woman decides to just turn and talk to another woman by her. They're standing next to us and the first woman starts showing off her new engagement ring and the second asks if she could look at it closer, so the first takes off the ring just as the boat lurches to a stop. The ring slips through her fingers and falls into the water.

"My ring!"

Everyone leans over the side of the boat, and the instructor says, "By the time someone gets their equipment on, it'll be too deep. This is one of the deepest parts of the ocean."

"But my ring," the woman yells.

I look to Rikki, knowing that she's the only one who could get it, and ask quietly, "Will you get it?"

She arches her eyebrow. "Why should I help?"

"Because you're the only one who can, love."

She nods and says, "I'll get it."

Before anyone can respond, she walks to the platform and dives into the water.

"What is she doing? That's dangerous," one of the employees yells.

"Don't worry, she'll be fine. Just watch," I say.

Everyone watches the water and two minutes later, we can see Rikki approaching the surface.

"See, I told you," I smile as Rikki breaks the surface.

"I got it," she yells.

Everyone stands shocked as she lays the ring on the edge of the boat and proceeds to lift herself out of the water. As she goes to dry herself off, a man says, "Wait, thank you for saving the ring it cost a fortune, but I was wondering, can I touch your tail?"

The question bothers me, so I ask him, "How can you ask that?"

"I'm sorry, I don't mean any offense, it's just so amazing," the man says.

I open my mouth to say that it is still offensive, but Rikki cuts me off.

"It's okay, I figured people would be interested."

"Are you sure?" the man asks.

"Yes, and anyone else can, too," Rikki answers.

Everyone gathers around her to touch her tail except the man's fiancée, who looks disgusted. I move towards her and ask, "Why do you look disgusted?"

She turns to me and says, "She's a fish."

"She's a mermaid and human, and she just saved your ring that you were stupid enough to hold over the edge of a boat. You should be thanking my wife."

She turns red, and turns around to ignore me, but at least I told her off, which puts a smile on my face.

"Alright, everyone it's time to get suited up to go giving," the instructor yells.

"I'll go back in the water then," Rikki says.

She goes into the water and the rest of us get suited up to go diving. This will be a fun dive.

****At Bella's apartment****

****Bella's POV****

I decide to make lunch before Diana gets here for our weekly visit. Ever since New Year's, once a week the two of us get together with Ashley and spend the day together.

We've only hung out a few times since New Year, but things are going well.

In fact, everything in my life seems to be looking up. Will and I went on our weekend away and it was like starting over. We didn't have to split our focus between our relationship as lovers and our relationship as parents. As we were taking turns with Ashley before, we didn't spend a lot of time enjoying being together as a couple. We lost ourselves trying to figure out what we were to each other.

The weekend was exactly what we needed to reconnect. Over those few days, we made some decisions about our lives and Ashley's. renewing our relationship, we decided to have Will live with me and Ashley part time. He would still have the boathouse to go to if either of us need time to ourselves. We also agreed to take the time to be alone, have a date night and a separate family night.

Since school is starting soon, we planned to spend the weekends together for sure because the weeknights will be busy. We decided that I needed another job since we looked at my bills for my apartment, and even with Will helping out, my savings are dwindling since I don't get as much from singing at the café like it seemed to before, I hadn't realize how much living on my own had actually taken money wise. So, I now need to search for another job.

Just as I finish making lunch, Will walks into the room and places Ashley in her play pen and grabs his free diving bag.

"I'm heading out to practice for the free diving competition next week," Will says.

"Okay, and you'll be back for dinner?"

"Yes, a few hours training should be good."

"Okay, I'll see you then."

"Bye," he says as he opens the door just as Diana knocks.

"Hi, come in," I say and wave to Will.

"Hey, Bella, am I early?"

"No, right on time, just have some lunch and we'll head out."

We sit down at the table, and I place the sandwiches in the middle of the table.

"So, how are thing?" I ask starting the conversation off.

"Alright, but Bethany's been something else lately," _When isn't she something else? _"She keeps telling me that she's going to drag me and Kelly back to the states and never let us leave." _ She can't do that, can she?_

I open my mouth to reply, but find that I don't know what to say to that. I shake my head. "What?"

"She's upset that we got "dragged over here" as she says and she wants to go back to the place we were before we came over here."

_ No one dragged her or them anywhere, and where does she get the nerve._

"Is that what you want?" _ I hope not, part of me wouldn't want you to leave me again._

"No, even if we aren't best friends or mom isn't the best supporter, things in the states were great, but it was because we were oblivious to what we were missing. At least, I was." _So was I for some time. At least you had someone who was there for you._

"What did you miss? Mom and dad always being gone. Moving all over the world, not staying in one place for more than a year?" _A lonely childhood._

"Things may not have been great on your side either, but if Bethany hadn't done what she did we would have grown together. Mom and dad might have been busy, but you would have had me to play with." _If only that were true._

I smile at her. "Maybe we would have never become mermaids." _Why does part of me, actually to go back in time and make that statement true?_

"Or we could have become mermaids together and been smart enough to hide it." _Yeah, like having someone else like me wouldn't have made me want to share the joy._

"We could have had all sorts of adventures togetherâ€¦" _and I wouldn't have had to learn everything on my own._

"And never had to play alone," Diana says.

Always having someone my own age, who wouldn't be left behind when my family eventually moved.

I smile sadly at her, "Too bad we'll never know what would have happened." _If only wishes could come true, I'd wish to see what could have happened._

"You know I don't blame mom and dad, _that's funny because I certainly do, _as much as I blame Bethany for making decisions for two defenceless four-year olds, when she was just 15."

_I guess the blame should be on Bethany as well. _"Really?"

"Yes, she made a choice that affected all of our lives, even yours."

"That's true. Anyways, we better head out now." _and this conversation is a little depressing._

"Okay, let's go."

****At the marine park****

****Cleo's POV****

Summer school ended yesterday and I have a few days to prepare for the regular school year. I've been lacking in work because I've had to focus on school and Lewis has been making enough to survive for a little while, but I need to get back to my regular hours as soon as I can.

As I walk around bringing fish to the dolphins, I realized how different it is working here after everything that's happened in the past year. Lori had been avoiding me for the most part. He feels guilty about forcing me to be a part of the dolphin show as more like an animal than a human.

Maybe I should talk to him, tell him its' okay. _Maybe not okay, but I understand his difficult position._ He doesn't have to walk on eggshells or avoid me. Just as I decide that, Lori came around the corner.

_I take a deep breathe. _"Hey," I say to him.

"Hi, Cleo," he says looking around.

"Can I talk to you for a second?" I ask.

"Uh, sure." He doesn't look sure at all, but he follows me to a table nearby, anyways.

We sit quietly for a few moments before I press forward. "You don't have to feel bad about what has happened this past year." _Even though if it had been me, I would feel bad._

He looks down and says sadly, "Yes, I do."

"No don't feel bad. It happened, it's okay and it's over." _I have forgiven him for it, after all._

"I feel like I let you down." _Well, after the guys being so supportive when they discovered our secret, it was a let down._

"You didn't let me down, but by avoiding me, _treating me like I wasn't your friend before,_ and refusing to let things go back to normal, I'm starting to feel like an outcast." _Maybe because I am different._

"I don't think things can go back to normal. No one can forget about your unique abilities, and being a worker at a marine park kind of reminds people of your abilities." _Is he blaming me?_

"You're right, so we can use it to our advantage, _as long as they don't try to look me in a tank again. _I'm the only one that can clean the tanks without needing to put on scuba gear and if there's an issue with the dolphins, I can really help. Remember when I got one of the new dolphins to eat when no one else could?" _That was part of my unique abilities._

"Alright, I'll let the other managers know that you're okay if they ask you to do some things that they've been avoiding asking you to do." _So, it wasn't my imagination, they have been avoiding giving me certain jobs. _

"Thanks, Lori, I better get back to work now."

He smiles and I go on my way. _Hopefully, things will return to normal._

****Some time later****

I'm finally finished at work and just get through my house's door when I'm shot at with a water gun. _Damn Lewis' resolution._

"Lewis!" I yell know that he did this as part of his New Year's resolution to get me used to getting wet and not changing. I immediately close my eyes and try to focus on not changing just like every other time he's gotten me wet this year.

I hear him click his stop watch to see how long I can put off the change. So far, I haven't been able to hold it off for longer than five seconds past the change. Lewis keeps trying, but one slip up in my focus and I change.

"You made it ten seconds passed," I hear Lewis say. _Oh yay._

As soon as it registers, I fall over with my tail. My concentration is lost.

I glare up at him despite being part of this decision to accost me with water at any given moment, it doesn't stop me from being angry, about the change.

"You made it longer," he says with a smile as he hands me a towel. _What does longer matter if I still change?_

"Yes, but every time I lose my focus I change."

"True, but all you really need is enough time as a person to dry off thus avoiding turning into a mermaid." _Then why not hand me a towel as soon as I get wet, hmmm?_

"Yes, but I'd have to dry myself off thus losing concentration and changing anyway," I say shaking my head just as I change back to having my feet.

"Well, we've only just started making this happen. At least, we've made progress," he says smiling.

"You're right," I say as he helps me up and kisses me.

"So, how was your day?" he asks as he smoothly changes the subject. _Better now, as always._

****At Emma and Ash's apartment ****

****Emma's POV****

Ash is coming home today, so I'm getting the apartment cleaned up while Jenna and his sister try to help the girls walk between them. I was surprised when Rikki told me that Maria and James walked a while back, so I've been trying to help the girls walk as well. _Shouldn't they have walked first?_

The girls have been standing a lot more lately, and are willing to wobble a little bit if someone's holding their hands. Lilianne seems to be the one that's doing better with the walking.

"Hey, what time is he supposed to get here?" Jenna yells over to me as I'm cleaning the kitchen.

"Uh, he said around dinner time." I say.

"So why are you so stressed out?" Jenna asks.

"He's coming home today and has been gone for the better half of two months and I want him to like what I've done to the place," I say. _I've been trying to make the place more homelike._

His sister pulls a face as she looks at the more homey look of the living room with picture and paintings hanging up. She still isn't my biggest fan, although she wasn't very happy with Ash's decisions throughout our entire time since we got back from overseas, either. She seems to love complaining. Even Christmas Eve, dinner didn't help making things better between me and his sister. Then after the holidays she came over every day to spend time with the girls. I like that she cares about her nieces, but I feel like she isn't really coming over for them, like there's some secret motive for her to be here _all the time. _

"It looks great, don't worry about it," Jenna says, and I feel relief slide over me.

"Ehhâ€¦" _Really? You have to say ehh?_

"What is your issue with my decorating?" I finally ask his sister, as she's been making side comments every time I ass something to the

walls.

"Ash didn't get a say in your decorating or your move here or anything since you got pregnant." _Seriously? It's been over a year, and if he wanted a say, he could say it, but no he just kept leaving me, and she has the nerve to say something now?_

I'm angry that she keeps having this issue with me when it was Ash's fault for continually leaving me.

"It's not my fault, it's his. I never said that if he had a problem, he couldn't talk to me about it. Besides the two of us have moved asses it so why can't you?" _Or have we? It does upset me when it's mentioned._

"He's my little brother and you've practically _ruined_ his life! What if, after he gives up everything else then you decide he isn't good enough, huh? Then you kick him out, and he's lost everything." _She has some nerve accusing me of ruining his life. If anything, it's ruined both of our lives._

"I know that the two of us have had problems, but I don't think it's any of your business and you coming over to watch me while he's gone is stepping over a line." _Now, I know what she was doing over here._

She stands up to yell at me, but then just decides to say, "You're right, I should go." Then leaves.

Silence follows before Jenna says, "Look Lily's walking!"

The two of us smile, and I decide to sit and play with my girls until Ash gets home, and I let his sisters issues go for now.

A few hours later, I'm making dinner, and Rosemary starts to wobble next to Lily-Anne just as Ash walks through the door.

"Ash!" Jenna and I yell excitedly.

"I'm home," he says with a smile. He walks up to me and gives me a kiss.

"And look, the girls are walking now," I say smiling at the girls each holding onto Jenna's hands.

"Aww, congrats girls," Ash says as he moves to hug both of them.

"So, how was it? Did you do well? Do you have a job set up for after your final year?"

"Slow down, slow down. Yes, I have a job when I get done with school. They loved me and it seemed like I was good at it. I enjoyed the job very much and the company is great."

"That's fantastic!" _As long as he doesn't have to move away._

"It definitely is, and I can't wait to tell you all about it, but let me just put my stuff away while you finish dinner." _Now I have to tell him I'm ready._

"Okay, um, why don't you put your stuff away in my room, ya know, if you want to make it our room," I say giving him a smile. It grows bigger when I see his eyes light up.

A/N Here is November's edition, I hope you like this, I decided to do more descriptiveness, tell me what you think. Thanks for reading, see you next time.

51. Settling in, and Passing the Torch

Chapter 49: Settling in, and Passing the Torch

Cleo's POV

School started again and soon we got into a routine of our alternating schedules with Kim and Kelly babysitting at any times we are both gone. We're lucky that neither of us work a graveyard shift or at least that there aren't any shifts that are that late at our jobs. It really helps us to know that from eleven to seven we are going to be in the same place together.

Other than those hours, the two of us are almost never together. Even on his birthday, Lewis had to work, which made me realize that we've reached the stage where work and money are more important than having your birthday off.

I was upset with him for not realizing that he would have to work that day. The day went like any other day, except that I had planned a special dinner for him. We both had classes that morning, so Kelly watched Catherine. I had a test, which gave me the extra time to pick up a desert, get Catherine and start dinner before Lewis was due to be home. All of sudden, as I get halfway through the dinner, my phone rings.

Lewis. Assuming that he's running a bit late, I answer.

"Hey, love."

"Hey birthday boy, ready to celebrate?"

He sighs. "Actuallyâ€¦"

I can almost feel my smile fade as I hear his tone of voice. _He's not coming._

"Don't tell me, you aren't coming home?"

"I've got a long night at the lab, I didn't realize I would be working today, but I have to go straight there and it sounds like a rough night." _On your birthday?_

I don't answer for a few seconds. I look at the meal, half prepared and the desert sitting on the counter. I resign to the knowledge that surprises aren't always going to fly, but I never thought he wouldn't get a decent dinner on his birthday.

"Okay, well happy birthday."

"Thanks, I love you," he says and hangs up before I can respond.

I look around again, well someone should enjoy this dinner, and I call my sisters to enjoy it with me.

The night went well, Lewis and I celebrated a few days later, when we both had the time, but haven't had the time since. Since we haven't talked about Valentine's day and today's the day, I'm assuming we aren't bothering this year. It's a Monday this year, so I figured with him normally working Monday's, why would today be any different? He hasn't said anything today either, aside from good morning before he left, he leaves earlier on Mondays, so usually he'll text me, but nothing. I figured it's possible he could stop by in between class and work, but I wasn't sure so I only bought him his favorite candy so I'd have something as a present.

I was hoping that Lewis and I would have a date night tonight, so when Kim and Kelly insisted on watching Catherine for the night because they don't have dates, I let them. I didn't have the heart to say no, on the off chance that Lewis would busy, and I'd then be completely alone, so I really hope Lewis is actually home. Although I suppose some alone time would not be too bad.

Since Kelly already had Catherine because of my classes, I walked straight home from school, instead of stopping to pick her up like I normally would.

As I approach my door, I notice that there's a bag hanging from the handle. I look around, but don't see anyone watching, so I pick up the bag and open it. Inside is a rose with a note attached to it.

"Love is full of surprises, follow the rose petals to find yours."

Thinking that only Lewis would do this, I open the door and follow the rose petals through the house to the small patio in the back, and there at the end of the petal road is Lewis, dressed nicely, and holding a red rose.

"What's this?" I ask feigning uncertainty.

"Our Valentine's date," Lewis says smiling. "We have dinner and dancing plus Kelly and Kim are watching Catherine all night, so we don't have to hurry," Lewis says with a sly smile.

"All night?"

"All night," he says handing me the rose and winking.

"Then let's get this party started," I say then I lean up to kiss him and whisper in his ear, "Happy Valentine's day."

****Ash's POV****

Since Emma and I officially renewed our relationship, we haven't had a lot of time together. we may live together and have a few classes together and have a few classes together, but by the time we are both at home and the girls are taken care of we are both too tired to really do anything or even talk about anything.

So, I decided to make our first Valentine's day since we've completely started over (last year was just too confusing with everything) special. The only problem is that it's been so long since I have had to plan a date or anything to impress Emma that I don't know what to do or if what I managed to come up with will do the trick.

I decided that to start off, she'd like a night off. She's been crazy busy with everything, and refusing to use a babysitter, even to just get a break from things. So, even though it's a Monday and not the normal day for her parents to sit for us, I convinced them to babysit, they aren't exactly celebrating today since Jenna and Emma's mom's sister came back to town. They have been disagreeing over whether or not they did the right thing, and Emma's mom still isn't happy most of her family aren't totally human, she's having trouble adjusting, which has resulted in them not celebrating, and able to babysit.

After I got that situated, I turned my attention to the plan for the night. It took me ages to think about what Emma might even consider as a decent date idea. It had been a long time, and the last time I checked, we bonded over the horses and our mutual love of being the best, our competitiveness. I know that she loved my Italian cooking, even if it was a full moon, and she liked that I was a good teacher, so I decided to take that into my plans.

Using that idea, I headed out to the stables, with the things that would be needed for a picnic, and found myself a horse. I ride out to the picnic area a short ways away and set up the table with the things I brought, and head back to stables and then the apartment.

By the time that Emma made it home from school, I had cooked our dinner, placed it in the basket, bought her present, and fed our newly named puppy, Buddy. I greet her with a kiss as she comes through the door, and hand her some flowers.

"Happy Valentine's day," I say to her before she has a chance to speak.

"Happy Valentine's day," she answers. "Where's the girls?"

"Well, it is Valentine's day," I say.

"And?"

"I thought we'd use this international date night as our date night without the girls for a change. Your parents are watching the girl tonight. It was a surprise."

"Oh, how sweet," she says. "So, where's our date?"

"Just follow me."

"The two of us go out to the car, and take it to the stables. Once there, she looked around and says, "Here?"

"No, not here, but close," I say, our horses are already ready and waiting. I help Emma onto her horse and then get on my own. "Follow

me."

We travel through the forest to the table I have set up.

After helping her off her horse, I say, "Close your eyes," and she complies.

I set up the dinner, unveiling the food, and placing the candy box and wine in the center, then I say, "Open them."

She opens them, and her reaction is just brilliant. She smiles and gasps and then just kisses me.

"This is perfect and cute. A perfect first Valentine's date for us to start over."

I smile. _Success._

Roughly ten days later, it's Emma's birthday and I'm not sure what to do for it. Usually, I would think she'd be big on a big family party, but I don't think she wants to right now, maybe I should do a small family party, it is her sister's birthday as well. As for the place, it would be nice to do it here, but that's somewhat lame, and it's a nice day out, so maybe the beach? I'll ask her brother.

So, I asked her brother, and he thought it was great, especially since they wouldn't have to worry about the water splashing and having to make up some excuse. The next step was to set up an area and make sure that I had the food and grill ready to cookout at the beach. I grabbed the girls, buddy and our picnic things, and text Emma to meet at the beach before heading out.

Once I have everything set up, and start the food, I see her brother and sister approaching with their parents behind them. I greet them, and make sure to say happy birthday to Jenna, so she doesn't hate me for forgetting it's her birthday too. They place their beach things and presents on one table, and then sit at the other.

"Emma should be here any minute," I say breaking the quiet.

"No hurry, how's the grilling coming," her father says smiling.

I invite him over to take a look, we've never really had a chat alone, and I've avoided him since I've caused so much pain to Emma, but at least he isn't glaring at me, so maybe we could bond over grilling.

"I've just started, I didn't want to get it done too soon."

He nods and starts talking about perfect meats, when Emma comes up, "Hey, I got your text, what's going on?"

"I thought you might like a cookout with your family for your birthday," I say smiling.

She nods and returns my smile, "This is brilliant, thanks." Then she turns to Jenna, "Happy Birthday."

"You too," Jenna says smiling. "It's nice to have a family birthday, and to finally celebrate with you."

"It is nice, now let's celebrate!"

****Zane's POV****

The honeymoon was amazing, but Rikki and I were both glad to be back with out twins and at home. As it turns out, married life is not that much different from living together life. Maybe it was because we basically already acted like we were married.

What with the kids, work and school, our being at home life was practically nonexistent. When we were at home, we tried to be a family, but we mainly were only at home to shower, eat and sleep. Since we already acted like a family at home, once we got married nothing changed. At least at home.

In public, people either seemed more critical or supportive. Her father was particularly happy about it because it means it would be harder for me to leave. Not that I ever would, but after everything that has happened to others in our lives, I can see the need for the security.

Today, we decided to just relax as a family. So, I find myself sitting on the edge of our indoor pool, watching as the twins and Rikki swim back and forth.

That was one thing about merpeople that Rikki and I learned quickly. As soon as they could crawl, they could swim on their own. of course, we kept them in the shallow end, but they didn't need the precaution.

The twins were developing fast and so much time has already passed, but there's plenty of time to go. The faster the time goes, the faster James approaches his fifteenth birthday. I know there's time, a lot of time, before he has to choose, but seeing all three of them in the water, I see what will happen one day where there would only be two. Two mermaids and one human or two mermaids and no human.

I sigh. No matter what, my family won't be the same after we tell the twins what happens to mermen. Regardless of the fact that it won't physically affect Maria as she's a mermaid, losing her twin brother one way or another will affect their relationship. If he chooses being a merman, she could visit him, but it wouldn't be the same. I close my eyes. I need to stop thinking about something I can't control. Enjoy our time as a perfect family. Maybe I'll just convince Rikki to have many more children, as if that will make it better.

I'm brought out of my thoughts by my brand new wife.

"Why don't you come in?"

"Don't feel like it."

"Why not?"

"Because if I came in, then I wouldn't get to watch you and the twins swim, and you know how much I love that, besides I like dangling my feet in the water."

"Okay."

She goes back to swimming and I go back to watching, ever since I discovered Emma, and knew mermaids were real, I have always loved seeing them change and swim.

Sometimes I wish that I could swim like they do, I'm still so amazed at the prospect of being married to a mermaid. Every time she changes still gets to me. I smile, my family won't be the same, but their experiences will be worth it.

My perfect family, what an odd thing to think. I never thought Rikki and I could be so happy and perfect like we have been, and are currently.

We really are happy and perfect together.

****Rikki's POV****

The time has really flown by for me, ever since the wedding things have just been fast and furious. The honeymoon was fantastic and went by way too fast. I was happy though, to be home, to be back with the kids.

Then school started and things were busy. Zane and I try to make as much time as possible to spend as a family, but it didn't take long to figure time just doesn't always work in our favor. February is now over, and March had begun. This is good news for me because I'll finally be able to pass the mermaid queen reigns to Melanie.

To be honest, I never really understood why it had to be me. Why I got the powers and queendom. I never knew anything about it and I didn't have anything the other girls didn't. So, it never made sense, but it'll be over tonight.

Since we don't have to worry about the full moon anymore, all the girls will stay away from the moon pool except the two meant to be there. We aren't sure exactly when the transfer takes place so as soon as the moon rises, I will be there. I check my watch, and realize that I need to go.

Zane has the kids at the cafÃ© with him while he works so there's no one to say good bye too or let them know where I'm going.

So, I lock up and head out to the beach. As I see the water, I start to run as fast as I can into it.

I dive and the water feels great. I take some slow kicks before I zoom off into super speed mode.

It didn't take long before I reached the moon pool and sat on the rock ledge in the water. Melanie isn't here yet, but there is time to relax.

Not long later, I must have dozed off in my day dreams because I'm shocked as Melanie swims in.

"Are you ready?" she asks.

"Yes."

So, the two of us climb out of the water and wait until the moon is over head. Looking at each other, we nod and jump in as the water bubbles.

It's over.

****Will's POV****

I woke up next to Bella like I have been for the past couple of weeks. I've gotten used to it, this strange new feeling of being a family except we aren't flawless. I feel like Bella and I are doing better as parents and as a couple but it's still weird to be living together.

In fact, even though it's been closer to a month, I still don't call this place home and I'm constantly asking Bella where she keeps things. At first she was accommodating, but now she gets irritated by my asking because if I'm going to live here I should search and find things on my own. it's aggravating but I'm slowly learning.

The two of us have gotten into a pattern, wake up and eat then go to school or work, come home and study then sleep. Even though we technically see each other every free moment, we barely are together. Like being a family or couple together. We haven't even had time to have a decent conversation so hopefully today will be different as it is a day off.

I walk into the kitchen and see Bella making breakfast.

"Hey," I say. "Any plans for the day?"

She looks up, a bit surprised, and says, "Actually, yes."

"For the three of us?" I ask.

At that, she looks at her phone and bites her lip.

"What is it?" I ask since obviously something's up.

"I haven't gotten the chance to tell youâ€¦"

"Tell me what?"

"I found a second job, I start today."

"A second job? Congrats, where?"

"At the beach, I'm a life guard. I went to the interview and explained that I got certified because if anyone was lost at sea, I could save them without having to find a paramedic and explain my tail. Who better to be a lifeguard than a mermaid? They gave be the job on the spot."

"Wow, well congratulations, you deserve it."

****Bella's POV****

It's been a few days since I got my new second job and things have been rough. It's another schedule to add to the mess of schedules hat

we have around here. Three work schedules, two school schedules, one kid's schedule, and even a mini schedule for the cat chores.

We've had to get dry erase boards with the different members of the family and different days of the week and it still isn't working. Every time one of us leaves my apartment, we have to let the other know what is going on for the day, where to drop off Ashley for babysitting and when we'll be back.

I was just about to check the day's plans when there is a knock on the door. I wasn't planning on any one coming over so I'm surprised to say the least.

Not wanting to open the door in case it's an attacker, I look through the peep hole.

It's Diana.

I open the door, and invite her in.

"Hey, what's up?" I ask immediately.

"Hey, I just found out that Bethany is leaving."

I sigh in relief, the early random visit made me think it was something serious.

"Okay, cool," I shrug.

"Okay, cool? That's all you have to say?"

"Well, yeah. I thought you saw this coming?"

"I knew it was a possibility, but I didn't actually think she'd do it!"

I shake my head. "Why are you upset? She's unhappy here, let her be happy somewhere else."

Diana glowers at me. "She's been the only constant in my life and she's leaving me. She has never left me before."

"Don't worry, you're alright. She may be leaving you, but dad'll never ignore and mom is trying to reconnect right? You'll have us now, and I promise that I will stay in your life. Besides, she might be lonely over there and come back."

Diana nods, "Thanks Bella."

We hug and I think, it'll be nice to have a sister to go to the next time I get upset.

A/N hey, here is the December edition, hope you like it, if I don't update before Christmas, then Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. And thanks for reading.

~JenJentheBoscoStick

Chapter 50: Family Birthdays

****Cleo's POV****

As March starts to fade, I realize that April is starting soon, and with April comes my least favorite day of the year: my birthday. Even though my dad has moved away from insane kiddie parties for an adult to moderate kiddie parties, I still hate any party for me. I don't like the attention and I've had too many years of avoiding my birthday that I feel like it's programmed into my brain.

Out of habit, I've found myself ignoring or misdirecting any and all conversations relating to my birthday and any plans for the day. Although Lewis understands, my dad feels different about it, especially now with Kelly around. Speaking of Kelly, dad noticed my evasiveness about my birthday, and instead used Kelly as a way to make me part of the conversation, like saying what should we do for Kelly's birthday, thinking that somehow, I would forget that it is both of our birthdays. Right, like I'm just going to forget.

Today is another family day and with my birthday so close I know it's all dad's going to talk about. I'm definitely not looking forward to this.

Suddenly, I realize how close we are to my dad's, and decide that I must have been lost in my thoughts, but now that I realize it, I want to drag my feet every step of the way. Lewis must have noticed my suddenly slow pace because he stops next to me, and places an arm around my shoulders.

"It's not that bad," he says.

"He wants to relive all of my birthdays with Kelly and me, as if they weren't bad enough the first time."

"He missed out on a lot of birthdays with the two of you together and with just Kelly."

"And that's somehow my fault?"

"It's not your fault, but it is your birthday, if you honestly have a problem with his plans, then tell him. The only way to get to do what you want to do, is to let him know. If that's just a special dinner or a huge party, he'll understand, he learned a lot from your 16th birthday. We'll do whatever you want."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"Thanks that really means a lot to me," I say before leaning up to kiss him. "I'm ready to face this family day now," I say and we start walking again. _Everything will be okay as long as I have Lewis._

****Bella's POV****

It's been a couple of months since Will officially moved into my apartment, but I still call it my apartment. Aside from clothes and

necessities that he needs there is virtually no sign that he lives here, and I know that it is because haven't exactly encouraged him to express his opinions on things. I know that my refusal to call my apartment "our" apartment has been the cause of all of our fights lately.

Why am I so insistent on not calling the apartment "our" apartment? I've been thinking about that question a lot lately and I can't pinpoint the reason why. **

> I've tried talking about it with the girls, but they don't seem to understand it either. None of them have had any issues sharing their homes.

Looking at the three of them, I realize that it would make sense that neither Cleo nor Emma would be able to understand as they have never been on their own, they've always shared their homes with other people, never really been alone. Even though I had my parents, I spent a lot of time alone at home, and I like being alone.

Maybe that is the reason I don't want to say "Our" because that would mean giving up my independence, not being on my own. I like being on my own.

The only people that I feel could understand my need to be alone are my sisters. Unfortunately, I only talk to one of them, and even Diana has a tough time being sympathetic with me. After a while of talking about it, she always says, "At least you had mom and dad."

I've stopped trying to explain that while I had my parents, something she didn't, I was still alone. Our parents were never around, we were always moving and never stayed anywhere longer than a year. Ever since I was a kid, I've sort of taken care of myself, which is why I have always been independent. It isn't Will's fault that I have a need to be independent.

As I walk through the door, and spot Ashley eating at the table, the kitten eating in the kitchen and Will placing dinner on the table, and I'm not surprised. It's like I just expect it, and that makes me stop for a second. If I expect this, then I'm not really independent at all anymore. It's so natural and usual now, he deserves for me to call this place ours, since it obviously isn't just mine anymore. It's ours.

After I accept that, I have to consider how I can show him, that I think of this place as ours instead of mine, but how? His stuff is here, he has a key, and just saying ours won't let him know I really mean it. There has to be a way.

"Hey, Will," I say as I sit down at the table.

"Hi, Bella."

"Your birthday is coming up right?" I ask.

Will scrunches up his eyebrows, and says, "Yeah, a couple weeks, why?"

"You've been so great these past few months and I thought I could treat you for your birthday so do you want to do?"

Will looks surprised. "Uh, just a family dinner would be nice, thanks Bella."

"No problem," I say thinking maybe my present could help show him that we share our apartment.

****Lewis' POV****

It's the night before our anniversary and I have no clue what I should do for it. It's our first anniversary and it doesn't feel like a card and a dinner would be enough. It feels like it needs to be special.

So, I decided to enlist the help of her father since he would most likely know what to do. Walking up to his door, I know quickly.

"Oh Lewis, what are you doing here?" Don asks as he answers the door, I didn't warn him that I was coming.

"Hi Don, can I come in?"

"Uh, Sure, Lewis, but Cleo's not here," he says as I pass by him.

"No, I know that, I came to talk to you."

Don shrugs and says, "I guess so, have a seat."

The two of us sit across from each other on the couch.

"So?"

"Tomorrow is our first anniversary and I don't know what to do for it. We aren't just dating anymore and the first one is special."

"Relax Lewis, yes the first anniversary has a lot of pressure on it, but I don't think Cleo is expecting anything particularly fancy or special. All she needs is you acknowledging it. Most women just want an acknowledgement of the special day," Don says sincerely.

"Just acknowledge it?" I ask because it seems to easy.

"Well, maybe just take her out to a nice restaurant and give her a decent present."

"A nice dinner and present?"

"Yes, I would think so. It doesn't have to be a big deal as long as you celebrate it."

I think about that. We haven't had a date night since Valentine's day and just getting out just the two of us would be a treat. So, I nod to Don, say thanks, and go home to find the perfect place for dinner and double check that the gift I bought her is still safe and sound in the back of my drawer.

Maybe I have a plan for our anniversary after all.

****Will's POV****

Bella's been really nice since she brought up my birthday. It's been strange because previously she had been acting ignorant of me almost like I was here but she didn't notice me. I was just there.

Now she's been going out of her way to make meals and talk to me and be with me. It's like all of sudden she decided to pay attention.

So far, my birthday has been great with her paying attention to me. She made dinner and dessert, decorated the apartment and wouldn't let me do anything all day. It's been really nice to have her working so hard for me.

I smile at the thought. As she brings out the cake and my parents, sister and Bella start singing "Happy Birthday" to me.

Afterwards, we eat the cake and start with presents.

My parents and sister's presents are much the same as last years. One that's a great present and something that I want then a present that's a joke and makes everyone laugh.

My sister bought me a mini-lawn mower perfect for one of Ashley's dolls but the joke part was that we don't have a lawn.

When it's Bella's turn, she hands me a girl and whispers that she has another gift in our room that she wants to give me alone.

Curious, I'm distracted the rest of the time that my family is here. Once they leave, Bella immediately goes into our room and comes out with a thin flat box that we usually put out bills and important documents in.

I look at her strangely, and she tells me to open it. Inside is a document that I've never seen before and a pen.

Quickly reading it, I realize it's Bella's lease and she wants me to sign it.

I'm shocked. "I wanted to show you that I'm ready to be less independent, and this is the way that I thought of. This would officially make it Our apartment."

"Wow, Bella, that means a lot to me, thank you."

"Happy Birthday, Will."

****Emma's POV****

As I look down on my twins and write in my schedule on our family calendar, I realize that it's almost June.

The months have flown by since the summer and Ash came back. He threw me a wonderful birthday party and a beautiful valentine's dinner, but besides that we've both been busy. We spend time with the girls, but mostly have work and school.

Ash has been stressing majorly about school stuff. His boss has told him that just because he got the job doesn't mean that he can slack

off his final year of school. It's been putting a lot of unneeded stress to do exceedingly well in school.

You'd think that he could relax after getting a job, but they won't let him.

Back to the calendar, though, noticing that May is quickly dissolving into June worries me. The girls will be a year old in a matter of a month and I don't have anything prepared for them. No presents, no party supplies, no party location, nothing.

I look over at them again, would they even remember this birthday? It's not like they are in school and would wonder why they aren't getting a party, but I feel the need to celebrate the day.

It will forever be a special day in all of our lives, so how do I celebrate it? A big party.

Stepping away from the calendar, I bring out the phone book and look for a kid's place to have the party. I already have a list of guests, which was the easiest because it'll be the family and the girls, in my mind and an idea for what kind of food, cake, and decorations to get. I can do this, I can have a great party planned in just a few weeks.

****Rikki's POV****

It's a week before my twins' birthday and Emma asked that I talk to her at the caf  today. I haven't quite decided what to do for my twins birthday.

So when Emma asked me to meet her, I got a little nervous. I just know she's going to be hounding me about my plans for their birthday and bagging about this big party she has planned. I'm not looking forward to this.

As I make my way into the caf , I can see her already waiting for me and I sigh.

I slide in the booth across from her.

"Hey, Em."

"Hey."

"So, what's up?"

"Well, you know about the party on Saturday and I just wanted to check that it's okay with you, I mean it's not just my grils' birthdays this weekend."

I never really considered if I was bothered by her party this weekend since I hadn't really thought that it would affect my twins' birthdays.

"Uh, yeah, it's fine. I never really gave it a second thought," I shrug.

"That's great! Maybe we could have a cake for them too. I feel so bad that I'm taking the weekend for my girls without a second thought to

your girls."

"It's fine, Emma, really all I'm thinking of doing is just a family dinner on Sunday."

"Really? The party isn't in the way?"

"It'll be fine."

Emma smiles and relaxes. "If you're sure, then thanks I've been worried about it because you always looked so angry whenever talked about it in the last few weeks."

I look down. I didn't mean to make her feel bad or worry about how I felt.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean for you to worry, but you are a worrywart, and I hate listening to you worry when you know everything will be perfect just as always."

"Oh I see," Emma says looking sad.

"You know your parties are the best, and everyone will have a great time."

She smiles. "Thanks Rikki, I can't believe they are a year old already."

The conversation then turns to our kid's past year.

****Ash's POV****

Today is a special day in my life, the day my girls were born. I should be happy and excited, but I'm not because Emma is driving me nuts with the party issues. Trying to make everything perfect and worried about it.

Even though she met my parents and siblings, she's worried about what my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins will think of her, and her powers. That and apparently this is the first time she'll be seeing her extended family since everything happened.

She doesn't want anything to go wrong, because she doesn't know how everyone is taking these new things about her.

Not knowing what to do as I watch her run around like a crazy person, I decide to help the girls get dressed. It doesn't take long and I'm back to watching Emma run around. At least it's the same as the party for her father she told me about: at her parents' house, Cleo's dad helped with the adult food, but there's also some kid food as there are a surprising number of little cousins.

The doorbell rings and Emma starts freaking out. "The party doesn't start for another hour!"

"I'm sure it's fine," I say as I answer the door. "It's the Bennett's," I yell.

"Rikki, why are you here early?" Emma asks.

"To help, although it looks the same as your dad's party. Perfect Emma."

"Yeah, but that party turned into a disaster!"

Rikki shakes her head. "Emma, that was the full moon. There is no full moon tonight and if there was we have beat it by now. Relax, please, everyone will love your party planning skills."

Emma nods her head. "You're right, I forgot it was the moon that caused that disaster."

After that, she relaxed and everything got better from there. Both of our families were all meet and celebrate our girls and the party was a success.

****Zane's POV****

After the party, Rikki laid the twins down before coming to talk to me. It was just passed midnight, which means that James and Maria are officially a year old.

"I can't believe it's been a year," Rikki says softly as she leans into me on the couch.

"At least it's been a great year," I say because it has.

"It feels like a family dinner isn't enough after the party," Rikki says.

"Why not?"

"Because it wouldn't include the girls. They've been part of my family for the past few years and having a family dinner without them just seems wrong, but it would be more like a party if I invite them all."

"Then it'll just be a small party. Maybe some pizza and things with some cake and pictures. That's all the twins really need. Just because it's a party doesn't mean it has to be an all out party like the parties Emma does for birthdays."

Rikki smiles at that and asks, "Do you think it's too late notice to invite everyone tomorrow?"

She looks hopeful, but I'm not sure.

"We could call early tomorrow, but I'm not sure. If it's an issue we could postpone it."

"I wouldn't want to postpone it, if things don't work out, we can have a separate party with the rest of them."

"That sounds like a brilliant idea. Now, we should probably go to bed, tomorrow's an exciting day."

She nods and heads upstairs while I choose to grab a snack. When I make it up the stairs, I find Rikki standing outside the twins room, watching them.

"Happy birthday, James. Happy birthday, Maria," she whispers. "Don't grow up too fast."

I wrap my arms around her and whisper, "They won't. They'll be ours forever."

A/N Happy New Year, I hope that you liked this chapter, and my new year's resolution is to finish this story, hopefully this year, I do.

53. Mermaid Time

Chapter 51: Mermaid time

Bella's POV

All of the recent parties made me feel like throwing one for Ashley was pointless so Will and I did a cookout and hung out as our small little family. It was perfect for us, as my mom wasn't exactly invited, which meant that the dinner would be for eight of us. Even though my mom wasn't invited, I was surprised that I received a letter from her just like I have previously. I had thought that she'd be too angry that I didn't invite her to leave a letter. This letter was all about me and the day I was born.

She wrote about the first time she held me and how she felt looking into my tiny face and seeing my innocence. She said that thinking back that she ruined her relationship with all of her daughters and that she will never truly get passed that, but that she wanted to start clean with her granddaughters future and present, and that I should think about whether or not I'm hurting my daughter by keeping her away from her grandmother.

That Ashley should be able to choose when she's old enough, and for that she needs to be given the chance to get to know her now. Which means that if I choose to hold Ashley back, then it'll be my fault that she never knew her grandmother.

I shake my head, on one hand, she is trying and wants to try with her granddaughter, on the other hand, why would I open my daughter up to the chance of heartbreak?

I've been considering both options since her birthday, but I haven't come any closer to deciding what to do. Which would hurt my daughter more? Because then I know I would have to do the other one.

It's a tough decision, and every time that I start to think about it, I find myself on the beach and ready to go for a swim. Obviously, my feet know what I want when I start thinking.

I look at the water for a second before running in.

As I feel myself change, I feel 100 times better, even if I don't have an answer yet. I start swimming along, and before I know it, thoughts of my mother's letter fade away and I start thinking about when I became a mermaid.

It'll be eleven years this September, and I can't believe it. I've never forget it. Wandering into the pool so young, not even thinking

about what i would do with wet clothes, but then I first changed and then feeling was just so incredible.

The magic that I felt as I became different, special. It was unbelievable. The other girl's anniversary is in a few days, but unlike me, they have always had others to celebrate it with, me I do it alone. I frown. Every time we've gotten together in the past two weeks, that's all they've talked about and I feel so left out.

Cleo and Rikki were the first friends I had since I became a mermaid, and hearing them talk about how becoming mermaids let t their best friendship reminds me that although we have being mermaids in common it's not the same especially now that the secret's out and there are many others surfacing.

It just makes me wish that I had changed with them.

Then as I swim into the moon pool, I remember all the fun I had on my own. As I sit on the ledge, I begin considering all the tough spots I got into, and how it was fun to reflect on the close call later, but then wanting someone to share it with.

I shake my head, I need to stop thinking like this. All it's doing is upsetting me and just because they have an anniversary I don't share doesn't make me any less of their best friend.

I should get back t Will, I told him I was only going on a walk to consider things, although he might be expecting me to end up swimming.

I've been doing it a lot since it's what I've always done when I needed to think. We've gotten used to each other's habits by now, although sometimes I wish he didn't know me so well.

I sigh. It's time to head back, as I move back underwater, and begin swimming, I see another mermaid heading my way.

As I continue closer, I see it's Charlotte, and I wave. Despite everything, we're still friendly, if not friends. I wonder if becoming a mermaid at a different time as the others and with Emma still here at the time, was why they were so against her joining them. and would that have been me if I had been here the year before? Could it have been me?

Shaking those thoughts out of my head I move on, I can't change the past.

****Ash's POV****

As the months pass, I realize that it's already August and come December 1st, I'll officially be a college graduate.

Even though I already have a job set up, I can't help but think of the ideas that Emma and I had at the beginning of all this: her art studio and my stable.

We haven't talked about it since before she started her first year. Even though it'll be awhile until we can start those businesses, we still need to plan. There is a lot of organization going into making a business, and we can't just start it without any thought. I mean

look at Rikki and Zane's café, it almost went under in just a few months, because they had no plan. So, I feel that we need to make sure there is a plan. That we have the money properly situated in case something drags us under.

So with that thought in mind, I get out some paper and start listing things we would need for each business venture.

Not long after I got started making sure to split what her business and my business needed, Emma entered the apartment.

She kisses the twins who were playing in the play pen, and then walks over to where I'm working on the plans.

"What's all this?" she asks after greeting me.

"Well, I was thinking about our planned businesses and realized that we hadn't started planning yet. I thought we'd get started."

She looks taken aback, but nods. She picks up some of the papers and looks them over.

"I think you got the list of things needed for both just fine, but I don't think these prices match. Not to mention the costs are affected by the buildings we use and how much space is involved. Are you going to but the land for your stable and build it or buy one already built?"

"I don't know, I guess that we have some serious thought to put into this. Here I am making lists and I'm not even thinking about the major stuff, just the little stuff."

"That's okay, at least you are thinking about a plan at all. It's nice to start planning."

She smiles at me, and we continue to plan.

****Zane's POV****

With the winter ending, it was time to check on the renovations to the outside of the café. We decided to expand a deck on the side of the building behind the office and the stage.

The expansion went out about 100 feet and has roughly 40 tables. There's supposed to be there step entrances on the three sides and a door from the inside café that leads to the outside.

Walking through the café with Rikki, we approach the newly installed door to the outside.

"Are you ready to see the finished expansion?" I ask.

"Yes," she answers and we walk through the door.

It gives us more space and looks great.

I look at Rikki, "What do you think?"

"It's great, and will definitely help with our increased customers."

"That's what I thought, and maybe if we get enough business, we can start planning for another café up the coast."

She gives me a look, before responding, "Let's take a step back for a moment. It wasn't that long ago that we were in the red and we only just got back our footing."

"I know, I know. It's just that I think we could do more."

Rikki just gives me a look, before saying, "We have plenty of time to expand our business later, right now, we need to focus on doing well with this business, and our family."

"You're right, I guess I just want to push our success to the forefront because I want us to be successful as soon as possible so that we can focus on our family and not have money problems in the future."

Rikki nods and says, "The best way to ensure a secure future is by building up slowly."

"You're right."

****Emma's POV****

I can't believe that five years ago, Rikki Cleo and I became mermaids. Just like Cleo had planned our first anniversary, I planned this one at the moon pool.

Taking the time to enjoy being a mermaid today. Most days when I take a swim, I swim as fast as I can to and from the moon pool, but not today.

It still amazes me some days that I can swim with the dolphins, see the reefs without gear, and so much more.

The first time I went swimming was just so overwhelming. So amazing, and I thought I'd get bored of being a mermaid, but it hasn't.

Gliding through the water, I decide to head into the moon pool. Ash was bringing the food and stuff to the moon pool while my sister watches the girls.

Entering the moon pool, I realize he isn't here yet and decide to just float in the water which I haven't done in a long while.

While I relax in the water, I remember all the times I could have been caught.

I spent an entire year with just my family traveling and it was much harder to hide my secret.

Not even two days into the trip, it was a rainy day in the country we were in and I couldn't think of any excuse not to spend the day with them. I thought I could stay covered and dry by continually drying off and running anywhere it was dry. I even tried to delay when we left dry spaces.

I got wet just when we were heading into the hotel one day, my dad was trying to show me something and grabbed my arm to get my attention and his hand was wet. I barely made it into a closet nearby after wrenching my arm free to dry off.

There were also many times over the year like that. It seems that there's a lot of rain elsewhere and then there was the snow.

I had no idea what the snow would do to me. It only took one time getting hit by a snow flake, and discovered that snow does indeed change mermaids.

It was one thing to watch out for spills and such, but when weather came into it, it was a whole new level.

I lose track of time comparing the weather, when Ash comes in, time to set up.

****Rikki's POV****

As I approach the beach, I smile. I know that the water as always been a source of happiness ever since that day five years ago that I became a mermaid.

Even with everything else that has happened the last few years, I still come to the beach and swim as often as I can. I know that we have a pool, but it just isn't the same as when I used to swim in the ocean all the time.

I miss the ocean swims with the girls, but at least we're celebrating today, and there hadn't been any fights about boys this time.

I smile as I rush into the water and dive. The water rushes over me for a minute I feel the change. I close my eyes and glide over the pool for fish underneath me.

I swim slowly, enjoying it just like I did the first time. Unfortunately, having a powerful tail that I was using to glide through the water makes the swim go much faster than you want.

Before I knew it, I was entering the moon pool and could see how much effort Emma had put into this anniversary party. I guess that she really missed celebrating the last few years.

I look around, and don't see Emma, so I call out, "Emma?"

I hear footsteps, but instead of Emma, I see Ash walking into the area.

"Hey Ash, where's Emma?"

"Oh, I told her I got this, so she should go swim some more." He shrugs. "She was looking at the water like she was dying to jump in again."

"Really? Do you mind if I go swim with her? Or do you need help?" I ask feeling like I should at least offer, even though I'd rather go swim.

He smiles. "Go ahead, go swim."

I smile and then turn around and exit the moon pool.

I swim around the outside area looking for a Emma's blue tail, when I see a different color. Swimming along, I get close enough to grab the fin, and I pull on it. When the mermaid turns around, I see it was Bella, I must have forgotten her tail color.

I wave to her, but she doesn't smile. I point to the surface because it's obvious something's wrong. She nods after a slight hesitation, and swims to the surface. I follow her up, and as I break the surface, she asks, "What do you want?"

"I saw you and thought I'd say hi, but what are you doing out here."

"I wanted to swim is that a crime?"

"Why are you so angry? Did I do something?"

She pauses. "No."

"Then why?"

"I came out here to enjoy a swim, but I swam into the moon pool and saw all the decorations â€¦. I just feel left out."

"Why do you feel left out?"

"You and Cleo were the first mermaids that I knew, and when you celebrate your anniversary and I'm not includedâ€¦" she trails off.

"We don't mean to make you feel that wayâ€¦"

"But it doesn't change the fact that I do."

"Then join us. I know you didn't become a mermaid on this day, but you are out best friend too."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

Her eyes light up and she smiles. "Let's go back to the moon pool."

The two of us race to the moon, where we find Emma and Cleo.

If Emma and Cleo thought it was strange that Bella was joining us they didn't mention it. The two of us get out and began our celebration of five years as mermaids and friends.

****Cleo's POV****

As September 1st approaches, I get more stressed about the party I've been planning for Catherine. It's her first birthday and I want it to be special.

So, I invited both our families and the girls to our house for a party on her birthday. And ever since they all said they were coming, I've been searching for food, decorations and presents.

"Cleo stop freaking about the party, it'll be okay," Lewis says jarring me from the busyness of what I'm doing.

"It has to be a good party."

"It'll be a great party, just relax."

"I can't relax, I want it to be perfect."

"And it will be."

I give him a look, and she says, "Why don't you go for a swim, it'll relax you."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, go ahead, enjoy some time to relax."

I kiss him and then smile and wave as I head out the door. Aside from the swim to the moon pool on our anniversary I haven't been swimming much.

I walk onto the beach, and even though I used to fear the water, I can't help, but smile at the ocean. Then I rush into the water and enjoy the feeling of the change that I once used to hate.

It's so strange that I actually treasure being a mermaid, when in the first few weeks, I absolutely hated it.

It really helped that I love dolphins and other aquatic animals. Now, I love every minute of each swim.

As I get closer to the moon pool, I see the beauty around it and it's still amazing. It's lovely and awesome to enjoy.

Gliding into the moon pool, I admire the place that changed my life forever.

At least it changed for the better.

A/N here's February's edition for anyone who's still reading I hope you enjoy!

54. The End of Another Year

Chapter 52: The end of another year

Ash's POV

These past few months have really flown by, and now today's my graduation day.

Guys aren't supposed to be all sentimental when it comes to the end of school or other chapters in our lives, but college has gone by so fast, I almost feel like I want to start it over.

As I get ready for the graduation ceremony, I reflect on my years in school.

My first year, I convinced my parents to allow me to stay in a dorm even though the college was close to home. By the end of the year, I was ready to move back home. Even though most college kids would move to an apartment instead of back home, I wanted to be back home.

Second year, went by quickly as there wasn't much going on except for meeting Emma, and working at the stables. These last two years have gone by way too fast. Everything that happened with Emma and her friends.

Their mermaidness has caused so many things to happen. The rest of my college career has been revolved around Emma and went so fast.

I grab my cap and head out of the apartment.

As I walk to where the lineup is, I start to think about what ifs. How would things have been different, if I hadn't met her? Would it have been some other girl that I got pregnant? If I had, would she have been insistent on keeping the baby or babies? Would I have abandoned her? Or would I have finished school, gotten a decent job, met the perfect girl, gotten married and children? Would I be reminiscing about parties and crazy stories instead of the back and forth with my decisions on what to do about getting someone pregnant?

While everyone around me is congratulating each other on making it here, all I can think of is that I did something right.

But as we walk out into the seats while we wait for our diplomas, I catch a glimpse of Emma and the girls, I think that maybe I did more than one thing right.

****Bella's POV****

Last year around my birthday, I wasn't exactly on speaking terms with my family, so my birthday went uncelebrated.

In fact, it would have been ignored if not for the present that was placed outside my door that morning and the few birthday texts I got that day. It was a rather sad holiday.

This year is different, dad knew about mine and Diana's getting to know you sessions, and asked if we could go celebrate together. He told me that mom would be there and although I'm not totally enthused with the idea, I have to admit that she does seem truly remorseful. She spent a lot of time writing those letters and she does seem to care now. I told him that going out would be nice, but I'd have to ask Diana if she would be okay with mom being there.

He told me that he would call her himself and check.

Apparently, she said it was okay, which leads me to the dinner where my dad said to meet for the dinner.

Will offered to water Ashley for the night, so I head there alone.

When I enter, I see that my parents are already here.

"Happy birthday, Bella. Your sister should be here soon."

"Thanks, dad," I say as I give him a hug. Then I nod to my mother and smile.

We begin make small talk about so many little things to pass the time until Diana gets here.

Not long after we started talking, Diana arrived, but she wasn't alone.

"Look who I found," she says as she walks into the room.

We all look to the person behind her and it's Bethany.

Judging by my parents' reactions, they didn't know that Bethany was even in the country let alone in this area.

It's silent for a few minutes before, Bethany says, "I want to start over, I thought I'd start by coming back for the summer." She bites her lip unsure of herself until I get up and extend my hand. "Hi, I'm your sister, Bella."

****Lewis' POV****

A week before Christmas, I got called into the office.

I know that I've done my best over the past year at work. I know that with school and my family, my best may not be all that great. I can't think of anything that I did wrong and I don't know why I'd be called into the boss' office.

It makes me nervous to be waiting outside the office because I have no idea why he'd call me in when he never had before.

"Come in, McCartney." I hear and get up to enter the office.

There's an open seat across the desk from the boss, I take it.

"Why he'd call me in when he never had before.

"Come in, McCartney." I hear and get up to enter the office.

There's an open seat across the desk from the boss, I take it.

"You look nervous."

"Well, sir, you've never called me into your office before and I'm nervous about why you would now."

"Well, I thought I'd give you the news myself."

"News?"

"Yes, I've been reviewing your work, and noticed that you only have a semester left?"

"Yes, I do. I'll be done in June, odd time to graduate, but I will

be."

"Well, in light of the work you've been doing and your soon to be graduation, I want to offer you a raise."

I smile. "That'd be great."

"Then when you are no longer a student research, but a full researcher, we do reviews every six months, in which you'll be up for a raise, as long as you're still staying with us after you graduate."

"Yes, I am and thank you for the raise. I appreciate it with everything."

"You're welcome."

I shake his hand and head home for the day. The meeting and surprises were both good and I'm happy about that.

I hurry home because I know this news will be celebrated tonight. It'll be so nice to have a little bit extra money in the house.

It's a great thing.

****Rikki's POV****

The summer and the holidays have been crazy busy at the cafÃ©, but Zane always makes time for us to be together and alone.

Without school, we make the effort to have the time to do the things that we love, for me it's swimming for him it's motor cross racing.

So, today, I leave the cafÃ©, and nod to Emma and Zane, who are running the counter.

I walk slowly to the beach, savoring the time I have alone. Life has never been better, but sometimes I just want to be alone.

It's weird to think how much my life has changed in last five years. I used to hate being around people and would never have considered that one day I'd seldom be alone, and that it makes me happy.

As I approach the spot that I usually dive in, I realize that I still go to the same spot that I went to when it first changed, even though it's no longer needed. I smile the things we do out of habit.

I dive in the water and slowly move through the water. As I swim closer to the moon pool, I notice another gold tail swimming ahead of me, and I decide to swim faster so I can see who it is.

Once I am beside the other mermaid. I look over and see my sister, Lizzie. I smile, and we swim together until we reach the moon pool.

"What brings you out here?" I ask her.

"I was just swimming along, but I do have news for you."

"Really? What is it?"

"I've decided to start college in the fall."

"Really? That's great, what brought this on?"

"Well, I love school, and I love kids. I was thinking that I could teach kindergarten."

"Wow that is perfect for you, and I know you do well with the twins."

We continue to chat about school and stuff, before Lizzie heads back to the shore. I realize that since saw Lizzie, I didn't really get my time alone like I thought and wanted, but I'm okay.

Maybe I've grown out of my loner tendencies.

****Will's POV****

Following our second year of college, I realize that I still don't have a major. So, since it is summer time, I decided to go over the classes I've taken, and the list of possible majors at my college.

There are different degrees possible, Liberal Arts, Sciences, and others, but the Liberal Arts, have been the most interesting to me. Specifically, teaching the liberal arts at the middle school level, like teaching English to years seven and eight.

He looked over the other possibilities, but he couldn't find anything that interests him more.

While I was still pouring over the possibilities, Bella enters the apartment.

"Hey, Will, what are you doing?"

"I realized that I still didn't have a focus, so I'm looking at majors."

"Oh, yeah, have you found one?"

"I think so," I say as I watched her grab Ashley, who's in the playpen.

"Well, are you going to tell me?"

"I want to teach, middle school literature."

"Wow, what made you decide that?"

"I don't know, I just like it."

"Are you still going to teach free diving too?"

"Yeah, on the side."

"Alright, well, I'm glad that you managed to find your calling."

"Thanks, so what would you like for dinner?"

After that we start dinner, and start dinner.

****Cleo's POV****

Lewis and I celebrated that he would be done with school in June, and that he got a raise, but now it's summer, and much like the last one, we are doing the same thing. He works and goes to school; I work and go to school. We have little time for each other, except the holidays that we both get off of both things. It's the only time we have together, and we have to see both of our families, so it seems a little too busy to enjoy our time together.

It's New Year's Eve, and we decided to spend it at our house. We invited both of our families to come over, but both sets of parents chose not to come, which leaves, his brothers, and my sisters, hanging out with us tonight.

It's this night every year that almost everyone thinks about the previous year of their lives. In my case, not much has changed in the last year, Catherine is growing up, I continue to go to school and work, Lewis is in school and work, although that will change next year, as he plans to graduate in June. It seems like nothing has really changed in the last year, not that I would want it too, but it seems like we've gotten into a routine, and sometimes it's a little boring.

Of course, Lewis tries to spark things up a bit, mainly with throwing water at me with the intention of making me learn how to stay human long enough to dry off. We learned over the past year that if it's only a little bit of water, like a drop of something similar, then the holding off on the change to dry off is rather easy, but if it's more like spilled drink or something that covers more skin, I can't hold off long enough to become dry. It just takes too long to dry it off completely.

This lesson helped us figure out the acceptable times to rush somewhere else or to sit and try to dry off before changing. Which I then told the other girls, and they started practicing, I think.

Looking back at the past year, I realize that the only time I really spent as a mermaid was around our anniversary. I didn't do much swimming at all, and I guess it doesn't bother me. I look at Kelly and remember what she said not so long ago about taking the opportunity not to be a mermaid any more when the queens changed, but back then I couldn't see it because I loved my tail so much. Now, I haven't had time for it. At least not in the past year.

Considering that as I overhear the others talk about their resolutions for the coming year, I decide mine will be to spend time rediscovering my love of my gift of swimming in the sea.

****Zane's POV****

After the new year celebrations, I don't have time to relax as I only have a few days to show Rikki how much I love her by having a great date night planned for our first anniversary.

The problem is that I only have a few days, and no plan to speak of. What can I do for the girl, who isn't a fan of expressions of love?

Hmmmâ€| she doesn't totally hate expressions of love, as there was that one Valentine 's Day where I pretended to have us both work instead of doing anything special. I was surprised when she was actually bothered by it, so I definitely have to do something special for our first anniversary just for the two of us. This means, at the very least, I need a baby sitter.

Now, knowing that I have plenty of people to ask, and that my dad wanted to babysit sometime soon, I turn back to what I can do for our anniversaryâ€|

I think back to all of our first dates before I knew the truth. We went to the mall, for ice cream, out for juice and lunches or dinners, and the movies. All of those kinds of dates seem a little lame for a marriage anniversary. Although, there was one thing I kept wanting to do, but she obviously couldn't and we haven't done since I learned the truth: going out on the boat.

I could set up a nice dinner on the boat, we could dance or swim under the stars. That'll be very romantic, and I think in this case Rikki might actually love it. I stop.

Would she love it? She's certainly changed in her attitude towards romantic, mushy stuff. I think it's possible. Either way, I think it's my best idea, so I get to work organizing everything.

I hope she likes it.

****Emma's POV****

I have been working a business plan for my art studio, diligently ever since Ash brought it up. I knew it would be a lot of work, but my advisor for school told me before school let out for the summer that in the next two years, business planning classes are here to help those of us wanting to start our own businesses.

Knowing this, I decided to make my plans first and planning to apply anything I learn in class to it later on. In the meantime, since Ash and I aren't married, we still have accounts and money separated. I made an account strictly for my business, which I try to put any spare money I have into that account without depriving me or the girls of anything that they need or even want.

As the girls continue to grow, now a year and half old, they need and want more things, especially at the store. At least I have Ash to take them sometimes now; he has his job on a secure schedule since he no longer has to worry about school. I still can't believe he's a college graduate, part of me feels like that's forever away for me, even though the last two years have really flown by.

I can't believe it's already another new year. As nice as the familiarity of having a set schedule maybe this year, things will be a little more interesting, but nearly as interesting as the year I got captured, pregnant, exposed, and ditched several times. Just something a little more than my average day every once in a while,

maybe I should mention it to Ash?

Either way, I am happy to start fresh again.

55. Chapter 53: Surprises

Chapter 53: Surprises

****Rikki's POV****

Today is mine and Zane's first anniversary, and though he asked me to get dressed nicely for something tonight, I have no idea what it could be.

My parents came and got the kids about ten minutes ago, and I am still waiting for whatever he has planned tonight. As I wait, I look in the mirror, I am wearing the same red dress that Zane first bought me. It's been my go to outfit every time we've had a special night because it reminds me of the day he finally stood up to his father. The day I realized that he truly did love me.

"Are you ready, love?"

I nod, and follow him out of our bedroom.

"We have to go for a bit of a walk first, are those shoes okay to walk in?"

"Yes, I know they are a bit fancy, but I think I'll be fine."

"Good," he says then grabs my hand as we head in the normal direction of the café.

After a few minutes, walking in comfortable silence, I ask, "We aren't going to the café, are we?"

"No, just wait, you'll like this. Something I've been wanting to do, but we've never done."

Which get me thinking, what has he wanted to do, but we haven't done? Since he found out my secret, I've never had to say no to anything, so what could it be? It could be anything, he never said he's asked me to do it, after all.

As I ponder, we slowly get closer and closer to the pier. I notice this, but just keep following, before we walk onto the pier.

"Are we eating on the pier?" I ask.

"No, but close," he says as he guides me onto the boat that is his father's, "We're eating in here," he says opening the door to the cabin on board.

I enter the room, and inside is a dinner for two, and decorations of hearts and such.

"This looks beautiful, Zane," I say as he holds a seat out for me.

As soon as I sit, the boat begins to move.

"I always wanted to take you out on the boat, but we just never did. So, I had a cook make this dinner for us, and the captain of the boat is going to cruise around the waters for some time, maybe afterward we could dance on deck, or go for a swim. Just dive off the edge of the boat, and do your thing. Whatever you want, I'll be happy as long as I'm with you."

I smile. "We can decide together. After all, it's been one year since we decided that we should decide everything together."

Zane returns the smile. "One year, it's been incredible."

"It feels like we've been together forever, I can't believe it's been a year."

He pours us some Champaign and lifts his glass, "To us."

"To us."

An hour later, dinner is finished, and for once we were able to enjoy conversation, as usually we are trying to take care of the twins.

We leave the cabin, and stand outside in a wide area. Zane goes to a boom box, and starts the music.

"May I have this dance?"

"Yes, you may."

Soon the two of us are dancing around the deck, totally engrossed in each other. It's like the first time we said we loved each other. Like there was no one and nothing that could get in our way.

I smile when I realize there really isn't. The only way for us not to be together for the next 70 years would be our own doing, and in this moment in time I can't see that happening. Together forever.

We continue to dance until we realize how dark it's gotten.

"Well, love, I think that our twins probably miss us."

"I bet they do."

"So, we should head back."

"Not yet, why don't we go for a swim?"

"In the dark?"

"Come on, just trust me. We can do this."

Zane just gives me this look like he thinks I'm kidding, but I just smile and hold out my hand.

He takes my hand and nods. The two of us dive into the water off the side of the boat, and still holding hands, swim up and down the reef. Of course, he has to get air a few times, but it does show the faith

he has in me since he could barely see.

Before long we head to the surface and I can see that he's happy to be on the boat again. I help myself onto the ledge, and I ask, "You've never really liked the water since the incident on Mrs. Chatum's boat, have you?"

"No, I try for your sake because I know you'll save me, but for the most part, I like looking at the water better than being in it."

"I'm sorry I haven't noticed before."

"It's okay, you help me feel safer. So, you can't tell as much."

"Aww, that's so sweet. Well, let's head home."

The captain must have had heard me as he turns the boat around, and Zane and I sit on the ledge watching the water go by as this wonderful anniversary comes to a close.

"Happy anniversary, here's to many more," I say as I kiss Zane under the stars.

****Emma's POV****

When I walk into the apartment after work, I see a note on the table.

_ "Emma, _

_ I have a surprise for you, please put on your favorite dress, and meet me outside. _

_ Ash. " _

Surprised, I head to our room and put on a nice blue halter dress and some blue low heels. I leave the room, and walk out of the door to see Ash standing outside a horse carriage with one door open and a rose in hand.

I smile. "Ash, what is this?"

"I wanted to surprise you, you said that you wanted some surprises every now and then. So, tonight, I thought we'd take a ride through the park on horse carriage."

"I am surprised, but I love it," I say.

"Okay, well, why don't I help you up," Ash says offering his hand.

I take it and he helps me up onto the carriage and then he climbs aboard and sits next to me.

We start talking about non important things like work and such while we ride around and see some nice scenery.

Ash hasn't looked anywhere, but at me despite the scenery, so I say, "Why aren't you looking around, it's so beautiful."

"I know it is, but I'd rather look at you and see you being happy."

"That's so sweet."

We continue to ride through the town until we reach the pool.

"Why would we come here?"

"Just come with me," he says and helps me out of the carriage.

Holding hands, we walk towards the pool, the closer we get the more I can see of the water and I noticed that there seems to be some stuff scattered in it.

"What's in it?"

He smiles, "Why don't we go see?"

Inching ever closer, I can see that the things in the water are closely formed together. As soon as we reach the edge of the water, I can read what it says.

"Emma Gilbert,

Will you Marry me?"

I turn to him, and I see him down on one knee, he holds out a beautiful ring.

"I know that it hasn't been easy, but I love you, and I want to spend the rest of my life with you. Marry me?"

I pause, in shock for a second, he went from the guy who left to me to the guy that never wanted to leave me. I smile.

"Absolutely, yes. I will marry you."

He stands up and we kiss before he places the ring on my finger.

****Bella's POV****

Ever since my birthday dinner, in which my older sister came back to get to know us, I have not known how to properly reconnect. The only thing that I have in common with her is our parents and our mermaidness.

It isn't much to go off of, but it is something so I decide to text my sisters.

Hey, wanna go for a swim?

Then I wait, of course, they could be busy or something, but I still wait as if I don't have a million other things to do.

My phone goes off, and I see a new message from Bethany.

_I'm busy, maybe another time. _

I sigh, that isn't exactly surprising as it is last minute and Bethany wants to start over, but doesn't seem to be interested in trying too hard.

I guess I should start on my list of things to do. I get up just as my phone dings again. New message from Diana. Opps, guess I forgot I texted her too.

Absolutely! Be at your apartment soon.

Looks like I'm going swimming with one sister after all.

While I wait for her to arrive, I work on my business plan. I want to own my own music studio, but I don't know all of things that go into a music studio. I start doing some research, and before I know it, my sister is knocking on the door.

Opening the door, I say, "Hey just a minute, I need to shut down my computer."

"No problem, what were you doing on it?"

"Just looking for some things I might need to look for in a music studio."

Diana nods. "Have you found a location?"

I shake my head as I lock the door behind me. "Not yet, I figured that I needed a list of things to look for in a studio in the first place."

"That's a good idea, that's what I did for my dance studio that I want to have. Actually, I found the perfect place."

"You did?"

"Yes, and it could probably work as both a dance and music studio."

I stop in my tracks. I turn to her completely, "Are you saying what I think you're saying?"

"I believe so, I'm saying that I think we should go in on a place together."

"Are you sure about this?"

"Absolutely."

"Okay, that sounds great."

****Lewis' POV****

Another Summer is almost over, and I've barely seen Cleo alone. Deciding that it would be easier to do something the last weekend of summer.

Going online, I find this cute B&B, a little inland that seemed

perfect for us. I want to surprise her for this, so I need to make sure that she has that weekend off, and that Catherine will be taken care of.

First, I'll make a temporary reservation. Calling the number of the B&B, I make the reservation and must call within 48 hours to cancel it without a monetary penalty. I agree and make a note of it on the calendar.

With that done, I close the laptop, and get Catherine ready before leaving to talk to one of my brothers about keeping Catherine for the weekend as we always ask Cleo's family. Then I plan to talk to Cleo's boss Lori.

It only takes ten minutes to get to my closest brother's house. He answered the door with a surprised smile on his face.

"Lewis! What brings you here?"

"I can't come see my favorite brother?"

"You must want something. Well, come in, come in."

I following him to his living room, and he immediately starts playing with Catherine.

"You're getting so big! You need to bring her by more often Lewis."

I smile. "She's actually the reason I'm here. I am planning to take Cleo to a B&B in a couple weeks, and was hoping that you'd consider keeping her for the weekend."

At first, he looks shocked, but then he looks down at the little girl in his arms, smiles and says, "Of course I will."

"Thank you," I say.

****Ash's POV****

Emma and I decided that we would tell our families separately and then celebrate on Friday. Both families were notified that we had something to celebrate on Friday so that they had enough time to make sure they were free.

After asking that they had Friday free, I asked when they would be free before Friday so that I could announce why we would be celebrating.

They found that Wednesday afternoon was the best time, so we gathered at my parents' house.

I arrive at my parents' house a little early. I was so nervous as I make small talk with my parents, waiting for my siblings to arrive.

Sensing my nervousness, my mom asks, "Is it that bad?"

I shake my head, "I think it's a good thing, but I don't know how the family will react."

My mom steps back, "She isn't pregnant again, is she?"

My eyes widen. "No, no. Trust me, that isn't it. We are just trying to get settled and get started with our businesses and finishing school, while taking care of the girls. We don't want or need more kids right now."

My mom looks at me for a minute, and then says, "That doesn't mean anything, you didn't need or want the twins either."

This upsets me, even though it's completely true. "It's not kids."

Silence follows between us until my father comes over and says, "Everyone else is here."

We nod, and I stand before my family as my parents sit down joining my siblings on the couch.

I take a breath, and I say, "I asked Emma to marry me and she said yes. We're engaged and we're celebrating on Friday."

The affect was immediate. My most vocal against Emma sister started spouting all sorts of crap about how Emma was forcing him into this. Just like the move, and the girls, and everything else that she should be blaming me for and blames Emma.

I look to the others. Dad looks uncertain, mom concerned, and a mixture of uncertainty among my siblings.

I stood there, speechless as no one, not one member of my family congratulated me. Emma and I are a family with our girls, and I do love her. I hear my sister say something about this being forced on me, but she's wrong and that's what gets me to speak.

"Stop. Stop right now. You don't know Emma and you shouldn't be saying anything in regards to her. She has never even hinted at wanting to be married. She just wants me to be part of my girls' lives, rather that means being friends, in a relationship, just living together, or married, it is my choice. She made that perfectly clear. I choose to propose, and I'd like for you to be happy about it."

Silence meets my words, and then slowly my parents nod, followed by my siblings.

"Congratulations Ash, we will need time to process, but we will be happy for you," my dad says holding out his hand for a congratulatory shake.

I shake his hand. "Thanks, dad."

With Dad's acceptance, I can see the rest of the family will start to work their way towards accepting as well.

****Will's POV****

As we get back to going to school and barely seeing each other, I try to find any little time for the two of us to get together.

On top of the normal work that we have, Bella has been spending much of her free time in her new studio with her sister.

I was surprised when I came home one day to see plans for the studio on the table, and the two of them working on it. I could hear them discussing what they were going to do now that it was officially theirs, which prompted me to ask what was going on.

Bella, looking extremely happy, explained that Diana wants to have a dance studio, and asked if she would like to share it and make it both music and dance. This lead them to asking their father for a loan, and despite their mother's concerns, ha gave it to them.

Since they got the money, they have been at the studio setting it up or buying things and such to prepare for their opening day. There's so much that they still have to do, but it would be nice to have some time to be together.

This leads me to want to do something special, since it has been a while since we've been out.

Coming home today, I notice that Bella hasn't arrived from school yet, so I change and wait for her.

"Hey Will," she says as she walks through the door and hands me Ashley. "What's for dinner?"

I smile. "Actually, I was hoping we could have a night out. Why don't you get changed and I'll change Ashley and we can head out?"

I see her hesitate as if she'd rather be doing something else.

"Come on, shouldn't we go out every once and while?"

She smiles. "Of course. Just give me a few minutes."

I nod and smile as she kisses my cheek and then heads in our room to change.

****Zane's POV****

I grab the mail as I walk in from class. Usually it's just bills as we live too close to our families for anything else.

I flip through the envelopes. Bill. Bill. A letter for Rikki. Bill. Bill. Wait, a letter for Rikki?

I turn back to it. The return address is for the school. Setting the other letters down. Holding the letter in my hands, I consider opening it just to satisfy my curiosity. I knew that we had a conversation about how it would be okay if I read her mail and she could read mine because we are married.

Even given this permission, I feel weird about opening her mail before I can decide whether or not I will open it, Rikki walks through the door.

"Hey love, what do you have there?"

"It's a letter for you. It looks like it's from school."

She has a confused look on her face. "Okay, well open it."

I quickly open it, and read the letter.

"It's from the school. They are offering you one of the five spots on a weeklong criminal minds course in Sydney during spring break. It's paid for, you'll get course credit and you'll make great connections."

She looks surprised. "Are you serious?"

I nod, and hand her the letter. "Wow. I can't believe this."

I shake my head. "Why not?"

"The only take the best five students in the program, and there's at least one hundred students."

"I still don't understand why you didn't think you were one of the five. You've been working a lot harder at university than in school previously. You deserve this."

Rikki shakes her head. "I knew I was doing better, but this is crazy. I wish I could go."

Now it's my turn to look confused. "Why can't you go?"

"Zane, I have responsibilities here. I can't just ignore them."

"Rikki, I can handle your responsibilities for a week. Just consider this opportunity, it would be amazing."

She smiles. "I'll think about it."

****Cleo's POV****

Sitting in class, I suddenly feel sick, and run out the door. I barely make it to the nearest toilet, and after a few minutes, I feel I'm done, and move to the sink to wash out my mouth.

As I'm washing out my mouth, I realize that this is the third time this week that I've gotten sick. The first time, I figured that it was something I ate, but how could that happen two more times in one week?

It doesn't make any sense. I usually don't get sick at all.

As I head back to class, I think about the last time I had gotten sick so often. Thinking on it, I realize that the last time was when I had horrible morning sickness with Catherine. _Catherine. Oh no.

—

Could I be pregnant? Is that possible? I think back to my last period, and I realize that it's been six weeks. _Uh oh. _

After I figure this out, I quickly go back to class, and talk to the teacher and explain that I needed to leave class early. The professor

was very understanding and I headed to a convenience store. I need to know right now if I truly am pregnant _again._

I get the test, and rush home. Since I left class 20 minutes early, I should have enough time to do the test before Lewis gets home. In a hurry, I quickly take the test and set my phone to the two minutes and it was the longest two minutes I've ever spent.

I pace back and forth in our bathroom. _One minute._ What am I going to do if I'm right? _45 seconds._ How's Lewis going to react? _30 seconds._ Is this really possible? Am I really taking a pregnancy test so close to the last time that I had a baby? _15 seconds._ How are we going to handle another pregnancy?

_10â€| _I don't want to know if it's trueâ€|_7â€|6â€|_I don't want to knowâ€|_3â€|2â€|1_

I flip the test over.

Pregnant.

****A/N ****I'll be honest, I started skipping a lot of time between the chapters because I really just want to finish this. I keep promising to get it done, but as my last year in college, life as spiraled out of control so I just want to finish with decent story in the end. I hope you guys that are still reading still like it. thanks for reading, if you want to review I'd appreciate it.

56. Chapter 54

Chapter 54:

****Cleo's POV****

I pace back and forth in front of mine and Lewis' family at our cottage. We had asked everyone to come over so that I could announce my pregnancy to them. I was so afraid that they would react horribly. I mean Lewis' reaction wasn't the best.

I was looking through my closet for something to wear for school, when I hear Lewis ask, "What is this?"

_ "What's what?" I yell back._

_ "This," he says holding up my positive pregnancy stick. _

_ I turn to look at him, and I can see he's upset. _

_ "It's a pregnancy test," I say simply. This wasn't how I planned to tell him, I had only just found out myself the other day._

_ "You took a pregnancy test, which is positive, and you didn't tell me? How come I didn't even know this was a possibility."_

_ I don't know what to say and am at a complete loss._

_ Lewis gets impatient and says, "Well? Do you have anything to say?"_

_ I didn't have anything to say. I was so upset that he was reacting this way. My hormones didn't help, and I started crying._

_ I can't see through my tears, but I instantly feel his arm wrap around me. _

_ "I'm sorry Cleo, I didn't mean to upset you, I just thought that we talked about everything, and I was upset that you hadn't told me."_

_ "I was thinking about how to tell you," I say this through my tears._

_ "Well, I know now, and I'm happy about it, I swear, I was reacting to not being told about it."_

_ I wrap my tears away, "Really?"_

_ "Yes, Cleo, I love you and I love Catherine, and I'm going to love this baby, but next time tell me if you even thinking it is possible."_

_ "I promise."_

Snapping back to reality, I hear, "So, what's the big announcement?"

I take a deep breath and look at Lewis. He grabs my hand and squeezes.

"I'm pregnant."

****Bella's POV****

Sitting at the caf  , I'm going over the paperwork for the new studio that my sister and I are working on opening. We received a loan from our father, but there was still a lot of work to do to prepare for it.

I was hoping that being at the caf   would encourage me to do the work that was necessary. Being at home makes it easier to distract myself, but then I see Emma walk through the door.

She has been badgering all of us about her upcoming wedding. Every minute of the last few conversations with her has been about the wedding, and all it does is annoy me to no end. She hasn't asked about me or Ashley or Will or anyone else in my life. I just feel like she doesn't care about the rest of us now because she is so focused on herself.

Maybe I could go to the library or another caf   or something.

I begin gathering my things, but before I finish, Emma walks over.

"Bella! Hey, I'm glad you're here, I could use your opinion on the colors and flowers for the wedding."

"Actually Emma, I was planning on heading home I have some things to do  " I say trailing off.

"Please?"

I look away, I want to help, but I'm so tired hearing about this wedding, and it's only been official a few weeks.

"It doesn't bother me what color you choose for your wedding, you should probably just ask your future husband."

Emma's eyes grow big, and I can see how I made her feel.

"I'm sorry Emma, I've just been upset that every time I've talked to you, you have been only focused on your upcoming wedding, and it's not fun talking to someone who clearly doesn't care about what's going on in your life as well."

Emma looks away.

"I'm sorry, I've just been so excitedâ€¦"

"I know, and I should have said something sooner. I don't want to ruin your plans, you should be excited, I just need some space from it, okay?"

Emma nods, "I understand. You don't have to leave, I'll let you work."

"Thanks, Emma."

She nods, "You're welcome."

****Zane's POV****

In mid-April, I decided to start looking on branching out to other locations. I had many connections through my father that kept me informed on possible places to check out as our second location.

There were several locations that were in Brisbane and Cairns that required me to visit before I would make a decision on the new place.

Every weekend in April and early May were spent visiting various possible locations. There were a surprising number of place available to check out.

As I was repacking my suitcase for this potentially last trip to Cairns, Rikki walks into our room.

"Are you sure you have to go? We can choose from the other ones that you've already seen." "Don't you want to make sure that we find the best possible place to expand to?" "I'm sure we can survive with one of the other possible locations. They all seem fine to me."

"I just want to make sure that it is the perfect place because we might have to spend a lot of time there, and it'll be the first place that we bought together. The first step to what is truly our own business. One not funded by my father, but by us."

"I appreciate that, but you've been gone every weekend for weeks."

With school, the kids and work, we haven't really had any time to ourselves."

I turn around, "I'm sorry, Rikki, I just want this new location to be perfect. I can't just randomly pick a location, Okay?"

Rikki bites her lip and looks away. "I suppose."

I approach her, and lift her face so that my eyes can meet hers. "After this weekend, I'll take a break. We'll take off work next weekend and it'll just be me and you, okay?"

"Okay."

****Ash's POV****

As the date we chose for our wedding approaches, I get more and more uncertain. I feel the same way that I did when I found out about the twins the first time.

We were dating and were fine, but then she mentioned a baby and then two and all I kept thinking about what was all the things that weren't great with us. All the times that we argued while she was overseas, her mermaidness, and regular relationship issues.

We broke up a few times briefly, the last time being after we found out about the twins. Since we got back together, I have been working on making sure everything is smooth and it's been working. I haven't felt those feelings of uncertainty in a long while. Which is why I proposed. Now these feelings are back and I don't know what to do. I can't talk to my family after insisting that I was ready for this, after all, we are practically already married as we live together, share everything, and act like a family with our twins. So why does ceremony make me so nervous?

It just makes it official. And it's not like I was planning on breaking up with her or backing down from my responsibilities. So, why am I freaking out so much that I can't sleep? What do I need to do to get over this?

I look at my watch, it's almost time for work to end, and I know that I have a buddy getting off work soon. I could talk to him. He knows everything, and he knows me best. He'll know what to say to calm my nerves.

I nod to myself and it's time to catch up.

****Lewis' POV****

Today's the day. I graduate from college and am officially promoted due to my degree. I am so excited for this. It'll make things much easier for Cleo and I, especially with the new baby on the way. We're lucky that I am graduating early freeing up more time for me to help with the kids. Which is part of the reason that I'm so excited.

I haven't had much time with Catherine, and I want to make sure I'm around more.

On the other hand, I did enjoy college and being challenged in classes, I'll certainly miss it. I know I'll also miss the chance I

could have had to graduate with the rest of my friends just like I missed graduating high school with them.

I hear the organizer yell for us to get in order, and I line up behind one of my friends from class. A few minutes later, I enter the theater where the graduation is being held with a smile on my face.

This is it. I'm going to be a college graduate.

****Rikki's POV****

The twins turn 2 in a couple of weeks, and I know that Emma is overwhelmed with her upcoming wedding, so maybe I should offer to join my twins' birthday with hers?

I was just planning on inviting the family and the girls' family to encourage our kids playing together. It always made sense to have them play together since they have something in common with each other that they won't have in common with other children. Mermaidness will always set them apart, so they were always going to be invited.

Besides it would make it much easier if we did just do that parties together, since we invite the same people all the time. It would make it easier on just about everyone. Looking down on my party plans, I decide to call Emma and ask her if that is what she would like.

Ring. Ring. Ring.

"Rikki? What is it? I'm busy right now," Emma answers and she's clearly stressed.

"I just wanted to ask you if you wanted me to join our kids' parties together, and throw the parties?"

"Kid's parties? But that isn't for awhile."

"Emma, their birthdays are in two weeks. That isn't exactly awhile."

Emma is silent for a minute. "I am such an idiot. How could I forget my kid's birthdays?"

I shake my head to myself. "One thing that you aren't is stupid, you've been stressed with the wedding. That's why I am offering this to you. Please accept it, and promise you wouldn't be too hard on yourself."

Emma lets out a sigh. "Thank you, Rikki, I think I just need a break something to relax me."

I smile. "Why don't we go for a swim? It could help."

"That would be great. Now?"

"I'll meet you on the beach."

****Emma's POV****

I wake up this morning and I smile as I realize that today is the day that I will be married to Ash.

I've looked forward to this day for so long, but one thing is for sure, it was a lot of work. Picking out the colors, flowers, location, food, and dresses in a short amount of time made it a lot of work.

But it'll be worth it. We'll finally be a full official family.

Being married is what I have wanted since I got pregnant because I always felt uncomfortable not having the traditional family life that I grew up with. I know that we lived together as if we were already the normal traditional family, but actually being married with make that official.

I get up from my seat in the dressing room off the hall that I chose for the wedding and reception. Glancing at my dress, I smile, this is really it. I put it on and my sister zips me up. "Are you ready?"

"I am," I say smiling.

Everyone smiles at me and the girls gush about how beautiful I look before my dad enters, "It's time."

The girls line up and one by one walk down the aisle with their respective partners.

Before I know it, I feel my dad link his arm with mine and we start walking down the aisle, I look at everyone gathered in the hall, before moving my eyes to the one person I should look at on today of all days: Ash.

He's smiling at me as he waits at the end of the aisle. I smile.

In a few minutes, we'll be married.

****Will's POV****

Amongst everything else going on this winter, I haven't really paid attention to my own family.

So knowing that both my sister's and my daughter's birthdays are in August, I decided to make August the month dedicated to my family.

I went swimming with Bella, Sophie and Ashley. We went to different fun places that all of us could enjoy. I took classes for several things that I never would have before. We had dinner with my parents several times a week. Sophie helped me with classes, and with Ashley at home.

Everything I did for the entire month was all about them and us as a family.

On their birthday's we went to a special place for dinner, and spent all day with each of them in mind.

****A/N: Sorry for the lack of updates. I hope to finish this soon, I**

hope that whoever's still reading, is enjoying the story still, and hopefully you'll continue until it ends. Thanks to the two who reviewed, you've both been very inspiring for me to continue working on this. **

57. Chapter 55: Springtime meets Summertime

Chapter 55: Springtime meets Summer time

****Ash's POV****

It's been a few weeks since the wedding, and the bills from the wedding are starting to roll in. The wedding money that was gotten as presents helped quite a bit, but Emma had noticed that our money was declining since I started paying back my school loans and the twins started growing quite a bit in the past few months. Then there is the fact that Emma's trying to get her business in line as well as mine.

I asked if she thought me getting a second job would help, but she didn't think so since I made more money at a business firm instead of the caf   which paid well, but not well enough for a family of four.

I went quiet after this, and the subject dropped for a few days, but it was brought up again over dinner later this week.

"I think that I need a better job, that or a second one."

I'm surprised, since she's still in school, and is trying to get her project off the ground.

"Emma, you have enough on your plate."

"I know that, but I am the one with inferior job, a job that isn't forever."

"I understand that, but I have an easier load right now  "

"Maybe I could just switch jobs  "

"That could help, but where can you switch to while you're still in school?"

"I don't know  .it wouldn't do any good to switch to another place like the caf  ."

Then I remember something.

"My firm needs an intern this summer, maybe you could be an intern?"

"Doesn't intern mean unpaid? And does your company allow married couples to work together?"

"Interns at my company are paid, and yes we are allowed to work together."

Emma smiles. "How do I apply?"

"I'll look into it."

****Cleo's POV****

At 7 months into my pregnancy I can't see my feet, and keep being distracted by it. Lewis has been extra careful with this one. He wanted to make sure that everything is perfect since we were more a little more freaked out to focus the last time around.

He won't let me do anything. He drives me to class, makes sure that I'm eating properly, and so many other things. I tried to explain that everything was fine in the last pregnancy, so I don't understand why he's more protective of this one.

At least I finally convinced him to allow me to go out swimming today. I haven't gone swimming in a while and that bothers me more than the constant overbearingness of him.

Since he was out at the moment with Catherine, I decide now is a good as any to go swimming. So I text the girls.

Anyone want to go swimming?

No one answers for close to a half hour, so I decide to go swimming by myself.

As I'm walking, I don't bother to pay attention to my phone until I hear someone yelling my name.

Turning around carefully, I see Rikki.

"Hey Cleo, what are you up to?"

"I'm going for a swim, didn't you get my message?"

"What message?" Rikki asks taking out her phone, and just noticing the text sent by Cleo a little bit ago.

"Sorry Cleo, I didn't know, can I still come?"

"Of course!"

****Will's POV****

As the spring break approaches again, I notice that Bella isn't as happy as she usually is. So I decide to do something different.

A trip for the two of us. But it can't just be anywhere, it has to be somewhere that wouldn't be completely lost on us by being too close or in a similar situation to the Gold Coast, so where can we go that will be different.

Opening up my computer, I start searching for good places to visit. I thought about going overseas, but we can't really afford it, and it would be a little too far in case something happens as I plan to have Sophie watch Ashley and our cat for the week.

Ignoring all of the beach related places since we live so close to the beach. There are some places more south of the Coast that have

some interesting things to visit, but Bella is not one wonder where there isn't a lot of hustle and bustle, so most of those places are out.

So maybe I should be looking at bigger cities that have many things going on and around the place.

Focusing on big cities, the first one that comes up is Sydney, which I haven't been to.

Scrolling down the links of possible places to visit and do in Sydney that leads me to believe it's the perfect place to go.

I start looking for hotels that the two of us can stay at, several were full that week, which is surprising. Considering the time of year, I guess I shouldn't be surprised, but usually spring break leads to the beach not the city. A few more clicks, and I find a good one in the center of the city.

Next, I look at plane tickets, as I doubt she'd be interested in driving all the way there, not to mention living on the coast, we don't have a car. We could rent one, but it would probably be more expensive than a flight to and from Sydney.

Although I could compare the two. Bringing up places to rent a car, and comparing prices to two way flights, I actually discover that it would be cheaper to drive, but then I have no idea how much gas would be or how far it is.

I could be wrong about how much the cost of a car would be, so maybe it would be safer to get the plane tickets. I just don't know.

I could ask Bella, but I kind of want to surprise her.

Going back and forth between the choices, I decide flying is the better option. I book the flights, and start looking at activities in Sydney, this is going to be a great trip.

****Rikki's POV****

"Have you finished packing?" I hear coming from the doorway.

"Not yet, I still have to finish the laundry, it has some things I want to bring with me."

"Do you want me to check on it?"

"Sure," I say and watch as Zane heads downstairs.

I've been packing for the trip to Sydney all week. It didn't take long for Zane to convince me that it was worth the time away to go on a trip like this. Especially since the possibility of this offer was limited to five of the best students of the discipline.

It also helped that Zane had been making frequent trips to find our second location, and then out to get our location set up once it was the established location.

Ever since I accepted the trip, I have been looking forward to this experience and trying to plan for the trip. Not everything is

mandatory and there are several seminars offered at the same time so I get to choose which ones I would like to go to.

This means that I could choose at random what I would like to attend or do some research on the seminars and their speakers. I finally decided which ones I am going to attend last week, then I had to focus on the other activities offered.

There's so much more to this trip then I originally thought. I'm so glad that Zane encouraged me to do this.

"What are you smiling at?"

"You," I say turning around and facing Zane.

"How can you be smiling at me when I'm not in the room," he teases.

"Oh you know, thinking of you, makes me smile at you even if you're not around."

"Good, because you'll have a whole week without me and I don't want you not to smile."

I smile before leaning up to kiss him, "I'll always smile with you around."

****Lewis' POV****

It's the last week in November and I have been on constant edge. Cleo's due date was set for last week, and so I have been trying to spend as much time with Cleo as possible in an attempt to make sure that I'm there when she goes into labor.

Unfortunately, there isn't a lot of time that I can be with her due to differing schedules and work stuff. This meant that I had to find another way to make sure that she isn't the alone when it happens.

Luckily, Cleo shares some of her classes with the girls, and each are willing to be late to class just to make sure that she gets to where she needs to go and isn't alone. Outside of school, if I'm not there, Kim and Don have both said that they would accompany her to work or stay with her at our home.

I've even set up a plan for Catherine for when she does go into labor. Kelly agreed to be on call to baby sit when it happens, she intends to come pick up Catherine as soon as we call.

"Lewis?"

I hear my boss calling to me, and I realize that I have been staring at my computer screen completely zoned out thinking about Cleo.

"I'm sorry, boss. What do you need?"

He looks at me carefully, then says, "Why don't you head home, you seemed extra worried today."

I nod. "Thanks, boss, I just have a feeling about today."

After gathering my things, I head out the door, and hear my phone ringing.

Pulling it out, I looking at my phone, I see Cleo's name written on the screen.

Oh no.

"Cleo?"

"Lewis! It's Rikki, we're headed to the hospital, Cleo's in labor."

I start freaking out and start rambling incoherent things that I don't even know what I'm saying.

"Lewis! Calm down! Cleo needs you right now, so you need to calm yourself and get yourself to the hospital. Can you do that?"

I shake my head. "Yes, I can. I'll be there."

****Emma's POV****

Coming home from my internship position at Ash's company, I immediately start working on my studio. I have the place picked out, things made to advertise, the money to rent the studio, and all of the other things that I needed for this business venture.

I've been checking over things several times a day as it leads up to opening day of my studio. I can't believe that it's finally happening, and I still have a year left of school.

"Are you sure you're ready for this?" Ash asks as he starts dinner.

I smile. "I have everything set."

"You've only been working at the firm for a couple of months, maybe you should wait until we could get more money?"

I look up stunned. "This is my project, Ash, that's what you told me."

"I know that, but if you do it now, then we'll be tight on money."

"Are you assuming that I'm going to fail?"

He shakes his head. "I didn't say that."

"You didn't have to!"

"Emma, please."

"No, you don't believe in me. I thought you were supportive."

I walk away from him, and I know that I need to calm down a bit, and decide to give myself some space.

A half hour later, I finally comes out of our room.

"I understand what you're saying, but I want you to believe in me."

"I do believe in you, but after seeing the effects of going bankrupt on the café, I can't help but worry. Rikki's got a good head on her shoulders, but they still ended up in the red, and it just happens, and I just want to be prepared. I know you want to open up the studio in two weeks, but I think we should postpone it."

I nod. "Okay, I will wait a few more months."

"Thank you."

****Zane's POV****

Sitting in the manager's office in the new location, I look at the flip calendar for the date as I sign off on some paperwork for the business, the date is January 15th, I've already been here two weeks.

After I finished up for the day, I head to the small apartment that I decided to rent when I realized that I might be spending a lot of time here to get this business doing well and being functional. I also have to make sure that I have the ability to trust the manager that I leave here for longer than a few weeks.

This means that I have been training a couple of managers that I might be able to trust sooner or later. I might be able to trust the two I've been working closely with the last few months and particularly the last two weeks.

They both seem to be on top of their game, and seem to get along well which is good for a smooth running place.

After I open the door to my apartment, I quickly shed my things and put some food in the microwave.

Before I could get the food out, my phone starts ringing.

Rikki

I haven't talked to her in a few days besides texts, I keep meaning to, but I've been working late, and then when I get to the apartment, I don't want to do much.

Taking a deep breath because I know she'll be angry when I pick up, I answer the phone.

"Hi love," I say as cheerfully as possible.

"Hi Zane, I'm glad to see you answered."

"You can't see that I answered, you heard that I answered."

"That isn't the point. Where have you been? You've barely texted, and certainly haven't called like you've been telling me you would."

"I know, I know. I just have been busy."

"Busy? Zane, I've been taking care of two little kids, and running our business from the location here."

"And I'm trying to get this one off the ground."

"Zane, that still doesn't put you on equal footing with me because I'm taking care of our twins alone, for weeks at a time."

I cringe at her tone, I know that she's taking care of them alone, but that doesn't mean taking care of things here isn't important or time consuming.

"It's a little more equal then you're giving me credit forâ€|"

"How so?"

"Running a business that's just starting is vastly different than one that's been running for agesâ€|"

"Still doesn't equal two little kids."

"I know, I know, but I have a lot going on too."

I can almost hear her eyes rolling, "Fine whatever."

"I'll be home soon, I promise."

"Only for you to leave againâ€|" I hear her mutter.

"I don't want to leave you, I just have to be here from time to time."

"Yeahâ€|"

"You know I love you right?"

I hear her take a breath, "Of course."

"So how was your day?"

"Alrightâ€|"

And the conversation continues from there, hopefully these trips will become shorter and shorter.

****Bella's POV****

The summer has been flying by quite quickly. So I suggest taking Ashley to Mako, and hang out on the beach in the last week before school starts again.

I smile as I see Will play with our daughter and I start thinking about things with him.

Things have certainly grown relationship-wise with Will. We live together, we take turns with Ashley and house chores. The trip we went on over break was a lot of fun, and certainly what we needed to grow more as a couple.

It was actually that trip that I started noticing that a lot of the couples are age and in steady relationships are getting engaged and married. Knowing that my friend's circle is a little different than normal friends circles, I look at my friends and realize that all of them are married now. Even Emma who I thought would never get married since Ash hasn't exactly made things easy on her is married now.

I know that I was resistant to the idea because I didn't want him to marry me just because I had his daughter, but now it's been over 2 years since she was born and I would be okay if he wanted to marry me now because I know our daughter wouldn't be the reason for our marriage.

How do I tell him that?

I see him waving at me and I smile back, maybe I should just mention it every so often.

"What are you thinking about?"

"Oh, just us. We've been together a long time."

"It's not that long," he says shrugging.

"I saw an announcement about another one of our classmates getting engaged."

"Yeah? Good for them."

"You know, we're practically married alreadyâ€|"

"Yeah, I guess. Let's go in the water."

I nod, maybe I couldn't convince him today, but perhaps another time.

**A/N hey guys, I am so close to finishing this I can feel it. SO, here is the next chapter, and a special thank you to Chinaluv and Zikki3 who have reviewed the last five or so chapters, at least I know someone is still reading. **

58. Chapter 56: Last Year

Chapter 56: Last year

Cleo's POV

I was thankful to have the summer off with our new baby boy.

It gave us plenty of time to prepare for when I would get back to school and work. As well as allowing everyone to visit and meet the new member of the family.

Although the first meeting did not go great with everyone.

It was a week after I had our son, I was finally allowed to take the baby home. We had to stay longer than intended due to some complications, but both my son and I were declared fit to leave this morning.

_ Luckily, Lewis' work had given him the day off to help me get home, and Kelly was already babysitting Catherine for us._

_ "We have to name him before we leave."_

_ I look up from our baby to see Lewis in the doorway._

_ "I know, I just don't know what to name him. I really wanted a girl."_

_ Lewis smiles slightly. "I know, it would make life easier if he were a girl, but he still needs a name."_

_ "I've always liked Adam."_

_ "Adam McCartney?"_

_ "Yes, doesn't it sound great?"_

_ He nods. "And the middle name?"_

_ "Does he need one?"_

_ Lewis shrugs. "I suppose not."_

_ "Then he won't have one."_

_ "Well, Adam, are you ready to come home?"_

_ The baby lets out a small noise, and Lewis says, "I guess that's a yes."_

_ A few days later, his parents and brothers came to visit._

_ While my family has always been supportive since the reveal of my mermaidness, and the effect it has on my future children, Lewis' family has always had issues with it, including the effects it has on boys versus girls._

_ I was holding him in the living room, when Lewis heard his family arrive._

_ "Hi, everyone, come on in, they are in the living room."_

_ Lewis' oldest brother is the most supportive, and asks to hold him._

_ "What's his name?"_

_ Before I could respond, his mother cuts in. "Why bother naming him if he might just leave us to live with fish."_

_ "What's that supposed to mean?"_

_ "It means that due to you issues, he might not see us ever again because he'd rather live underwater with fish."_

_ "He'll do exactly that if you treat him differently from the moment he is born. But as long as we love and care for him, there's a better

chance that he will give up that life over this one. And even if that wasn't a factor, I won't allow you to treat him differently for the odd chance that he might decide to live underwater."_

_ "If he might leave us, I won't be spending extra time with him."_

_ "What is wrong with you? He is your grandson. He's not even two weeks old and you already have hostility towards him. I think you should leave."_

_ His mother just glared at me before heading to the door._

****Zane's POV****

A month into my last year of school, I get called into my advisor's office. I'd been missing a lot of my classes due to issues at the other location. Since Rikki knew this location better than I do, it was decided that I would deal with issues at the other location and she would deal with the issues that came up at this one.

Which meant that every time that something came up, I was the one the left regardless of missing class.

I knew that I was in danger of being kicked out of a couple of my classes since they had stricter attendance rules. This wasn't something either Rikki or I want since it would push back my graduation, which almost happened last year.

"Mr. Bennett," I hear, and look up.

"Yes," I say.

"Come inside, I'm sorry for the wait."

I go into his office and take a seat.

"Do you know why I asked you here?"

"I'm guessing it has something to do with missing classes?"

"Yes, two of your professor's have indicated that you have missed too many classes to continue in their course. They understand that your situation is different and difficult so we want to offer a solution."

"Which is?"

"Switching all of your classes to online courses. The lectures are all online, and there's a program that tells us whether or not you've watched the lecture. All of the assignments are turned in online, and you would only have to come in for the exams."

I'm surprised that he's offering me this option and if I take it then when I am home I can take care of the twins while I study. This would definitely help me.

"How do I switch over?"

"I will make the arrangements, and let you know when you can access

the lectures and assignments."

"Thank you. I appreciate this."

A few hours later, I'm taking care of the twins at the café when Rikki walks in.

"Hey," I say without looking up.

"Zane, what are you doing here, don't you have class?"

"Actually, I had my meeting today with my advisor."

"Did you get kicked out of class?"

"Not exactly."

"What happened, Zane?"

"My professors were going to kick me out of class, but my advisor suggested transferring all of my classes to online courses with the same professors so it won't deter my graduation plans."

"That's great."

****Emma's POV****

_It's been months since I have worked on my plans for the gallery besides saving more money. _

_ So, coming home today, I was surprised to find the plans sitting on the table as if I had just looked at them before I left for school._

_ "Ash?"_

_ "Hey, Emma, I wasn't expecting you home so soon."_

_ "Ash, I come home at the same every day."_

_ "Oh, I didn't realize how late it was."_

_ "I guess. Do you want to tell me what is going on? You're acting weird."_

_ "I wanted to surprise you. I've been working on your opening night for your gallery. You had most of what you wanted in the plans, and I thought I could surprise you with it. I know you were upset when I asked you to delay the opening."_

_ I'm speechless. I hadn't expected this, but it is nice that he wanted to surprise me and that he wants to do this for me._

_ I smile. "When is it?"_

_ "Next Friday."_

Coming back to the present, I look at the dress I chose for tonight. I can't believe that I'm finally going to open my gallery and officially be a business owner.

"Are you ready to go?"

I nod.

A short time later, I enter my gallery and smile. It's exactly as I planned for it to be. Everything I envisioned is here.

Six weeks later.

Business has been booming since opening day. I was truly worried that I might have been over extending myself with this new endeavor.

Of course, as proud as I am about this project, I have started to feel a little overwhelmed with the amount of work it takes to keep a business going.

I also have school, and my other job at the caf  . The internship with Ash's company was only for the summer, so I was let go at the beginning of February.

I had to ask Rikki for my job back, and was surprised when she was reluctant to give it back to me.

"Emma? What are you doing here?" Rikki asks after I enter the office at the caf  .

_ "I came to see if I could get my job back."_

_ "I thought you had a better job with Ash?"_

_ "I did, but they let me go after the summer ended."_

_ "Well, everyone needs extra help in the summer," she says pointedly. _

_ "I'm sorry, Rikki, I thought I could convince them to keep me on longer so that I could make more money for my gallery."_

_ "I understand that, Emma, but you knew weeks before you were going to start working there, that you were quitting here, and you didn't tell me. It really hurt us to lose you when you worked so many hours here, all of sudden. You didn't even give us notice to hire someone else. Now, we finally found a good replacement and you want your job back so I should just give it to you?"_

_ "I know I should have given you notice, but we're best friends and family. Doesn't that count for anything?"_

_ "It does count for something, but that's what makes this worse. You know how hard this business has been for me. You've been taking business classes, and you understand that the position that you had was more than just a worker, which means it was more important that you don't just quit like that."_

_ "I'm sorry, Rikki. I never considered that losing a manager that you relied on, would hurt the business. I thought you were just angry that I quit."_

_ "I understand the opportunity that was given to you."_

_ "I am sorry. I won't do it again, when I start my business, if I need to quit, I will help you find a new manager and train them, I promise."_

_ "Okay. Then you're hired."_

Maybe I should call Rikki, and ask her for some pointers on how to deal with a new business. I won't let myself fail, and she knows how to help.

****Will's POV****

As senior year wears on, I get asked more and more often what my plans for after graduation are.

The truth is that I haven't planned for after graduation, yet. I've been more focused on school, Ashley, and Bella than I have on the future.

I feel so lost whenever I listen the friends in my classes talk about internships, and having this jobs lined up for after school. I keep quiet because I don't want to admit not having anything.

Even Bella has been asking questions, since her plan is clearly mapped out ever since she opened the studio with her sister.

As I leave my last class for the day, I start heading home, but maybe I should visit our schools' career advisor instead.

I nod to myself, and change directions to the career center on campus.

It only takes a couple minutes to get there, and I approach the desk.

"Hi, I'm hoping to speak with my career advisor."

"What's the name of your advisor?"

"I'm not sure. I've never been here before."

"What's your major or job idea?"

"Middle school History teacher."

"You'll need to speak with the education career advisor, Mr. Smith. He's already left for the day, but I have some papers on education careers that you can take with you."

"That'd be great. Do I need to set up an appointment with Mr. Smith?"

"Yes, he has an availability on Tuesday at 3:30 or Wednesday at 2. Other than that he's booked the rest of next week."

"I'll take the Tuesday slot."

"Okay. I need a name to put in the slot."

"Will Benjamin."

"Okay, you're all set."

"Thank you."

A month or so later, I'm sitting at the kitchen table applying to schools where I could work some have special programs for new graduates as student teachers, when Bella comes in with the mail.

"You've got an official looking letter," Bella says as she hands it to me.

"Thanks," I say as I open it up.

_Mr. Will Benjamin, _

_ We are pleased to inform you that we've accepted you into our student teacher program. â€| _

_ Congratulations, we look forward to hearing from you. _

_ Gold Coast Middle school. _

I only focus on the important points of the letter, which means all I took from the letter was the acceptance, and congratulations.

"I found a job."

"Really? That's fantastic."

"Yes. I just have to accept it."

"Congratulations."

"Thank you. Let's go celebrate."

****Bella's POV****

My sister and I started our studio several months ago in January, and now as I look over the paperwork I begin to worry.

When we started out, we had a lot of traffic with students thanks to a lot of advertising. It was a shock when the first session of classes ended, and the classes were much smaller.

I thought that maybe we needed to do more advertising, so after every practice and gig at the cafÃ©, I would mention our studio. Diana went around to local schools and posted posters with a picture of our studio on it with a list of our services.

After the second session of classes ended, there were less numbers for the third session. The only good thing was that there were some private lessons with a few of the students, which helped replace some of the money.

The problem though, was that it wasn't enough. When we had calculated the numbers for keeping our studio in business, we must have expected it to be more consistent than it has been.

I was relieved last month when our income had shot up. I thought that we were just in a slump the last few months, but this month was low again.

We are swimming in red, and need something that will put us back in the black.

"Diana?" I call out to her as I see her passing my office.

"Yes, Bella."

"Come in, we need to talk."

"Okay."

"We're in trouble. We haven't been making enough money to stay afloat."

"How far under are we?"

"Not far, but we'd need a really good month or two and then remain at a constant amount for a while to stay even, and even more to really get above ground."

"That's not going to be easy."

"Then maybe we need to call in reinforcements."

Diana just looks at me strangely, but I know just the girls to call.

A few days later, I sit at a table at the caf   with my sister. We have all of our paperwork with us, and are waiting on Emma and Rikki to get off work.

"Are you sure we need help?"

"Absolutely, we should have asked for their help sooner," I answer.

"Why? We had a good plan and they are just your friends they aren't any better with their businesses."

"Yes, they are. Rikki and the caf   were sinking for some time and she managed to bring it back into the black somehow. She will know how to help us get back to business. While Emma is even better for advice since she had planned for rough months by having plenty of money in a savings account for emergencies. Clearly they know what they are doing and we need their help. Besides, they are both studying business."

Before she can respond, I see Emma walking towards us, and Rikki a little farther behind her coming out of the office.

"Hey, what's up? You didn't say what this meeting was about."

Before I can respond, Rikki walks up behind her.

"We have some questions about our business, and thought you could

help."

"How could we help?" Emma asks as she and Rikki sit down.

"We just need advice on how to get us back above water and stay that way."

Rikki takes the papers that I offered to her, and says, "Let's take a look."

****Ash's POV****

I smile as I walk towards the office in Emma's new Gallery with the girls on either side of me. She's been working so hard since she got the gallery up and running, but she's been so successful that I'm glad that I helped her by putting her plans in motion.

"Mommy!" I hear from my girls as we enter her office.

She looks up from her work and smiles as she hugs our three year old daughters.

"How is it going, Emma," I ask when she turns to me.

"Good, but I still have plenty of work to do," she says looking sadly at the girls.

"You've been working hard for a couple of months, I think you could take a night off."

"Ashâ€|"

"Emma, this business is important, but you need to spend time with your family as well."

She shakes her head. "I have been spending time with my family."

"Very little."

Emma looks away. I can see that she knows she should keep working, but she's torn because she really hasn't been around much in the effort to keep things going great for her business.

"I need to keep working, but tomorrow. I promise."

"Okay," I say although I don't believe her. "Come on girls. Say good bye to mommy."

"Bye, mommy."

"Bye, Emma."

Unfortunately, Emma didn't keep her promises and by the third day passed "tomorrow", I decided to talk to someone else about it.

My sister volunteered to watch the girls while I had a private conversation with the one person who understands having a partner who's always working: Rikki.

I'm sitting on the beach watching the waves crest on the shore waiting for her to join me. I hope she has some good advice.

"This is an interesting place to meet, why here?"

"I'm tired of having conversations over desks. It seems like that's always the case these days."

"I know the feeling. It's been busy at the café and the only way I talk to anyone is if it's a planned meeting."

"Like this? I'm sorry I just didn't know who else to talk to. It's been months since she's taken a break."

"I know, but it does take a lot of work, and graduation is coming soon, she'll have more time then."

"I just think that she needs time off before she does that."

"Well, I can't say I'm the one to talk to about that, as Zane isn't any better. He's usually never here."

"I thought he was always here."

Rikki shake my head. "He's almost never here anymore. I'm practically a single mother because now he has no obligation to come to, since he's finishing school online."

"Rikkiâ€|"

"No, Ash. You don't get it. I want to be understanding, I want to be accepting. I get that our business needs him there sometimes, but it's gotten to the point where I barely see him. Which is my problem, not yours. Emma has always been dedicated to things that are her personal mission, she tends to dedicate all her time to them. But at least she comes home to you. At least every night you can see her."

I look away. "I know that she comes home every night, but it's like she's my roommate, you know?"

"I do, but I don't know what to say to make her understand that. If I did, do you think Zane would still be gone all the time? Do you think that I'd be taking care of my kids, alone most nights?"

I say nothing. I just wanted a solution, one that I thought she had.

"You can't tell me anything that will help?"

"I just told you that I don't know how to help."

Clearly upset, I say, "Thanks for nothing," and stalk away.

****Rikki's POV****

After my discussion with Ash, I realized that I hadn't seen Zane in six weeks.

Six weeks.

I can't believe that it's been that long or that I hadn't realized how long it has been. I check my phone to see the last time I talked to him, and according to it. I haven't talked to him in a few days.

This isn't good. I've already gotten used to taking care of our kids alone, and now I haven't even been in contact with him for days. Soon it'll be weeks, and then months. I don't even know when I'm going to see him again.

I close my eyes, and bite my lip. I need to discuss this with him, and it has to be in person.

Decision made. Looks like I'm going to go on a trip.

I go back to my office, and call in my other manager that I promoted since Zane and Emma haven't been spending as much time working here and sometimes I need a break.

"Yes, Rikki."

"I need you to work some extra hours this coming weekend. I know it's short notice, but I just have something I need to do away from here for a few days."

"So, you just want me to pick up your shifts?"

"Yes, if you could?"

"No problem."

"Thank you."

She leaves, and I dial my sister's number.

"Lizzie, can you do me a favor?"

"Depends on what it is."

"I need to go away for a few days, could you watch the kids for me?"

"You're going to leave your kids for a few days?"

"Zane and I need to talk and I think it's best if I went without the kids."

"Okay. Then I will take care of the twins for you."

"Thanks you're the best."

A few days later, I find myself walking up to the caf   in Cairns. I went to the apartment Zane has to find it empty first, and figuring that he was still at work, I came here.

I see that the inside is much bigger than the caf   at home. Maybe that's why he's been here so long.

After a quick look around, I spot Zane serving a couple in the corner, and decide that I should wait for him in the office.

I enter the office, and notice that he has lots of pictures of the twins that I've sent him, and pictures of the two of us. I guess he hasn't completely forgotten us while he's been here.

The office is almost exactly like the one back home, which is nice in a way.

"Rikki?"

I turn around, and see Zane for the first time in weeks.

I nod and suddenly I'm enveloped in his arms and relieved.

"I've missed you so much."

"I've missed you too that's why I'm here. You've been gone for weeks."

He looks confused. "What no, I haven't."

"Zane, you have been here for six weeks. You haven't seen me or the twins, we haven't even talked for over a week now."

"Has it been that long?"

"Yes, it has."

"I'm sorry, Rikki, one day turns into another here."

"Obviously."

"You're angry."

"Of course I am, Zane. I'm living alone in our home, taking care of two kids on my own, and struggling with work and school. I want my husband back or maybe we should do something elseâ€¦ there's no point in being with someone who isn't around," I say and when I do, I realize that I meant it. If we can't work this outâ€¦ then it's the best thing for us to do.

"Rikki, you don't mean that."

"I do. I can't do this anymore. Not if this is how it says."

Zane closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. "I love you, Rikki, I love our kids. I know how hard this has been, and you're right it's not fair for you to be with someone who is always gone."

I patiently wait for him to say more, as stating the truth isn't enough for me. Admitting that it isn't fair, isn't enough.

"I will pack tonight and go back home. I have everything set here. I recently hired everyone I needed, and they seem to be doing okay."

"Then why haven't you come home?"

"I don't know. I guess I've liked working in Cairns and it's true that they have needed me, but I could have come home, and I didn't. That's my fault. How about from now on, you'll be in charge of this place. They will call you if they have issues, you will be the one to come if needed. Not me, I will stay home, and I won't be travelling."

"You mean it?"

"Yes. I don't want to lose our family, and this past year I was doing a good job at doing just that. I will do whatever it takes. I promise you."

"Thank you."

Zane smiles at me, "Why don't we go celebrate."

"Let's do it."

****Lewis' POV****

As we approach the end of the year, Cleo's graduation, and Adam's first birthday, I start noticing a decline in our finances. I knew that having to buy new stuff for our son was the original reason for the decline last year around the holidays, but I thought that we were fine since Cleo started work again when the summer ended.

I start going over all of our spending in the last year, and separated things into whether or not we needed what we bought.

An hour later, I realize that we spend a lot of money eating out or buying things we didn't necessarily need at the time, like new clothes when there was nothing wrong with the clothes we have.

It didn't help that, according to our spending, every time we went to the store for something we needed we would come out with something we didn't for the kids. All of the things that we bought were small, but they add up.

Just as I am figuring out how much we should set as a budget, Cleo comes in with Catherine and Adam.

"I stopped by the store on my way home."

"That's good. What did you buy?"

"Just some food, and this cute little outfit for Adam and a small toy for Catherine," she says holding up the onesie she just bought.

"Cleo," I say shaking my head, "He didn't need a new outfit, and Catherine didn't need a new toy."

Her smile falls, "It didn't cost much."

"But buying something for each of them every time we go to the store adds up. We need to do something about this extra spending."

"It can't be that bad."

"It is."

"What?"

"We have certain bills to pay, and certain costs that we can't avoid. However, spending money on things we don't need like new toys or clothes is a waste of the money unless we absolutely need it."

Cleo looks upset for a moment. "We've never had money problems before, why are we having them now?"

>"Two kids, you still in school, and just regular life things. You're still working at a job that is for students, you need something that makes more money, or at least a higher up position. Suppose we wait until after graduation, that will be fine, but we'll need to be on a budget until then."<p>

Cleo nods. "I guess I haven't paid attention to the money issues."

"Well, it's time that we did."

"I understand."

59. Chapter 57: Graduation and Epiloge

Chapter 57: Graduation and Epilogue

****Cleo's POV****

The final weeks leading up to graduation have been extremely busy. Adam started walking earlier than Catherine, and kept getting into everything. Every time I tried to study he would find some way to distract me.

As I prepare for finals, I realize that I need someone to watch the kids mainly Adam for me as I need to focus.

The problem is that I don't know who to call, all the others are busy with work or their own finals. My sisters are both busy as well.

I would call my mom, but she moved back to the States, and Dad is way too busy this time of year. Sam is gone on business trip for the week set to come back for graduation.

I suppose I could call Lewis' family, but they are all still weird after the argument with his mother, which they sympathize with even if they won't say it.

Lewis says that we can't afford to spend money right now, so hiring a babysitter is out. I have to find someone who would do it for free.

Who can help me?

Rikki's sister might help. Rikki did say that she would be willing to help us out for free after I confided in her about our money troubles. So, I'll call her.

One week later.

Lizzie was a godsend helping us out whenever Lewis was gone so that I could study, and now tomorrow is graduation and I'm happy to say that with her help, I'm positive I passed with flying colors.

****Rikki's POV****

Zane and I celebrated all night after he made the decision to let me handle the new location which brought him home.

The next day, we met with all of the employees at the new location to explain things and to bring me up to speed on the goings on at the location. We even spent one on one time with each of the managers to help them understand that everything would be through me. It turns out that Zane has been taking on other positions to smooth things over in the process of getting things moving. He just never stopped, so I set things straight, we hired those we needed and before long we were on our way home.

He spent the last few weeks making it up to me and the kids, which has made things great. It's like things went from horrible to better than normal.

On the morning of our graduation, I woke up to breakfast in bed.

"Zane, what's this?"

"You haven't been sleeping well, so I thought I'd let you sleep in. I also brought breakfast for you as I thought it would be nice, on a day like today."

"That's sweet."

"I know. Now, I'm going to take the kids to my dad's and meet you at the graduation ceremony. You should have plenty of time."

"Thanks Zane, I love you. I'll see you later."

"Love you too, Rikki," he says then kisses me before leaving.

Twenty minutes later, I'm getting sick in our toilet. When I finish, I wipe my mouth, and look at the calendar next to the sink. I search for the red circles that indicate my period, and notice that the last time there were red circles, was five weeks ago.

All week I had been avoiding looking at the calendar even though I bought some pregnancy tests that I hoped that I wouldn't have to use, but after giving up my breakfast for the last week, I think it's time.

I open the three tests that I bought, and go through the motions of testing myself.

Three minutes later.

It's time. I'm going to find out if I'm pregnant again. I reach for the tests, and flip them over one by one. They all say the same thing.

Pregnant.

****Emma's POV****

Walking up to the girls standing in a circle waiting to line up for graduation, I see Cleo hugging Rikki and Bella smiling behind them.

"What's going on?"

"Rikki?" Bella asks, clueing me into the fact that it's her news.

"I'm pregnant."

"Congratulations! What exciting news."

"That's what I said when Rikki told me, she was worried I wouldn't be happy about it," I hear Zane say from behind me.

"Well, with everything elseâ€¦.can you blame me?"

"We've been a lot better since we switched things around," Zane says and I can hear the argument brewing.

"Let's not discuss that now. This baby is wonderful news, and today is a wonderful day. We should be celebrating."

"And we are," Cleo says nodding. "Tonight at Mako?"

"Absolutely."

Before we can change the conversation, a woman comes in to order us into a line to enter the graduation room. Since Rikki, Zane and I all had the same major, the three of us got to sit together, but the others had to sit with their friends in their majors.

It didn't take long before they started calling our names and handing us our diplomas.

I smile and cheer as Cleo receives hers. Then Bella and Will. Before long, Rikki is walking across the stage in front of me, and I can't help, but cheer, and then it's my turn. With all the cheers in the crowd, I'm so overwhelmed as I walk hoping that I don't trip.

I make it to the dean, who hands me my diploma, and shakes my hand, then I head down the stairs.

Before long, the ceremony is over and I'm throwing my cap in the air and cheering with all of my friends.

We're finally done.

****Bella's POV****

All of us were smiling and laughing as we headed to the cafÃ© for our celebration. Just like with our original celebration after high school graduation, the cafÃ© was decorated with the graduation hats

and congratulation things just for us and our families.

It was closed down for the night as no one wanted to be thinking about working on a night as special as this. Although there were two servers that brought out food and drinks.

The music playing in the background got us all dancing and having a great time. We danced the night away, and then once it was just us, Will says, "Excuse me a minute," and walks over to Zane.

I'm completely confused as I watch him take Zane to the side over the dance floor, especially because he looks so serious, and I can't help, but wonder if they are going to get into some fight like they used to.

Suddenly, I'm being guided to the stage and the music is completely gone.

I see that it's Rikki that lead me up the stairs, and she turns me around to face the middle of the stage, where I see Will standing before.

"We've been together a long time, Bella, and I have a very important question to ask you."

I'm smiling like a crazy person, as he gets down on one knee, and opens the ring box in his hand.

"Will you marry me?"

"Yes! Absolutely yes," I scream as I pull him up to kiss him.

****20 Years Later****

****Will's POV****

Watching my wife, Bella Benjamin sunning besides her best friends, is the best feeling in the world. For years I thought she would never want to marry me since she would always think that it only had to do with Ashley and not just our relationship.

I still remember when I noticed that Bella was dropping hints about marriage, I was so excited, I went out and got the ring a few weeks later, made my plan for proposing at graduation. When she said yes, I was still surprised. We were finally engaged, finally going to be a proper family.

Then in the following weeks she slowly got less interested in making plans for the wedding. She kept saying that business was busy and didn't have the time for plans, at the moment. Months passed, and I thought she just wanted a commitment from me, and after she got it, she didn't really want to commit herself. We started fighting, and things got worse. A year after I proposed she gave me the ring back, and I moved out.

We still had to deal with each other, given that we have our daughter, who didn't understand what was going on. As time passed, our anger eased, and then we spent one night laughing and hanging out like the good old days. I was thrilled especially when she admitted that she missed spending time with me.

Six months after I moved out, we went out on date. It was wonderful. Our relationship had started over, and a few months later, I found myself on one knee again. We got married within the next year, and couldn't be happier.

When she got pregnant with our son, we decided to that it was time to move. By the time that William "Billy" Benjamin was born, we had found the perfect place.

Aside from a fear that Billy would leave when he turned 15, we were a happy little family.

Coming back to the present, I smile as I watch Ashley, who's now 23, helping her younger brother, Billy, 15, who is adjusting to losing his tail.

He hasn't gone swimming since he gave up his tail a month ago. He knew how important this decision was, and although Bella and I wanted him to make the decision on his own, we couldn't help, but hope that he wouldn't leave us. We never said anything to him, but Ashley was a lot more vocal about it.

She didn't want him to leave the family, and always tried to downplay how much she loved her tail. She even offered to get rid of her tail somehow, beg Melanie to trade the Queeness with someone so that she could get rid of her tail, but Billy said that it would only make her miserable and that although he loved who he was, he was meant to live on land, while she was meant to be in water.

It always makes me smile to see that the two of them growing up so close despite being eight years apart.

It took a long time, but at least we're happy.

****Lewis' POV****

As I sit next to the other guys looking out at the ocean watching our kids and wives playing in the water and sand, I think back on the last twenty years.

Cleo and I struggled for a few months after graduation, but once we got back on our feet, everything was great. Luckily we had enough room for Adam, and planned to just leave it at that. I love kids, but I didn't imagine having more than two.

That's why it was such a surprise when Cleo got pregnant ten years later, we thought that there was no chance, even though we were still young enough, it had been so long, we didn't even consider it. She was ill for weeks, but given how long it had been, we assumed it was just the flu.

Although she was a surprise, we were thrilled that Chloe was born, since we didn't have another room, Catherine offered to share her room once she moved out of our room. We thought this was really sweet, especially since she was entering her teen years at the time, but the truth was that she just didn't want to move to another house. The arrangement would only be for a few years since she planned to move out at 18.

As it turned out, Catherine and Chloe only shared a room for four years, a year less than planned because Adam chose to live with the mermen.

We tried our hardest to get him to choose living on land especially since we knew born mermen that had chosen to give up being mermen, but he was dead set on his decision since we told him about it when he was 13.

In all honesty, I tried to be understanding, but never having had faced this dilemma, there was nothing I could say. Catherine tried to appeal to him, but all he kept saying was that he felt like he belonged in the water.

I always thought it was more than that though. Over the years, my mom clearly paid more attention to the girls instead of him, and even my dad and brothers weren't much better, they kept their distance waiting to see what he would choose. I figured this distance that he could clearly see was definitely the reason for deciding against staying on land.

Why would he stay somewhere, he felt he wasn't wanted?

Even though Cleo's family was very understanding and spent extra time with him, just as we did as a family, it didn't change anything.

Coming back to the present, I smile at my son waving at me from the ocean, he comes up every few months, and always on our big get together days to visit the family. At 21, he still looks like he's never been happier. Whatever caused him to choose his tail, clearly it was the right decision.

****Ash's POV****

There's nothing like getting sun on the beach while watching your family swimming in the waves enjoying time with their closest friends.

I smile as I look at them, my family.

Emma's gallery really took off after graduation. She continued to work at the caf  until a year and a half after graduation when she finally felt that she was doing well enough that she didn't need a second job just in case. It was a good thing too, as not a month later, she found out that she was pregnant again, and I wouldn't have wanted her to continue working two jobs.

I remember when she told me that she was pregnant again. I was happy this time, completely. I was ready for another child to grow our family.

Especially since I wasn't sure that it was ever going to happen. After talking to Rikki, I thought maybe Emma didn't want me. I mean she wanted the family together, which was part of the reason she married me, but I wasn't sure she wanted me. Which was strange since I was the one who rejected her all those years ago. Over the next year, I kept trying to get her to spend more time with the family, but it wasn't until the girls started preschool a year early, that she realized that she was missing a lot more than she was there, and

started spending more time with us.

So when she told me, I was determined to have the right reaction. Immediately, I started looking into a house that we could get, buying baby things, and talking about the new baby and how excited I was. Maybe even a little too excited.

Our son was born in the fall, and I couldn't be happier. Since Emma had her own business, I opted to take time off to take care of Kyle as a stay at home dad. After three months, Emma suggested that I start working on my stable that I wanted to own. In order to do that, we decided to stay in the apartment for a few years as the girls loved sharing a room, as they shared everything.

Six years later, my stable was doing great, I had quit my other job, and we were happy with the girls, and Kyle living in our apartment, until Emma once again became pregnant. When we found out that it was a girl, we knew that we had to move and found the perfect place right by the water. Casey was the final addition to our family, and we finally had all of our dreams completed.

We worried about Kyle dealing with his decision, and tried to put off telling him about it at all. A year before he had to decide, we were arguing about how to make the right choice in our minds, which was not go, when he overheard us.

Kyle was so angry in that moment, I thought he was going to join the mermen just to spite us. Having just sent Lily-Anne and Mary-Beth off to college, we didn't really want to consider losing another child so soon.

For the next few months, it seemed fruitless, he was determined to leave us. It wasn't until Casey, still quite little and not understand anything besides her brother possibly leaving, practically begged him not leave. She did everything she could to convince him that he was needed that if he left they wouldn't be a whole family, and with those beautiful puppy dog eyes, she asked, "You aren't going to ruin our family, are you?"

Kyle couldn't say no to that face, and softened his stance enough to talk to us.

As I watch Casey, now 12, trying to help Kyle, who's 18 and who gave up his tail for the sake of our family I smile the brightest smile I have ever had.

It almost didn't happen, but thank god that it did.

****Zane's POV****

After graduation, I spent the next nine months making everything up to Rikki. I had a lot to make up for, especially because I let her down so much in the previous year or so. I did as much of the work as possible, I took us out on family days, and I made sure to take her out on a date for just the two of us every week.

On our anniversary, I took her to all of her favorite places that remind her of our best relationship moments. It was a truly memorable day.

Before long, our daughter was born, and both Maria and James were thrilled to have a little sister. Since we had four bedrooms, we able to give each of them their own room, and I helped pick up name signs for each of them: Mom and Dad, Maria, James, and Hanna, our newest addition.

Everything was working out perfectly as the twins started school, and the business in both locations were booming. Rikki still had to travel to the other location, but she was always efficient about it, never stayed longer than she had to.

In the months that Rikki was at home with Hanna, she managed to start her first book, and get a publisher behind the idea of the book.

At my insistence, she spent the next two years working on writing without distraction aside from the baby.

By the time that Hanna was ready for school, at five, Rikki had written two books and was working on a third. I told her that I was going to hire someone else to help in the café and she should focus on writing.

This plan worked brilliantly. She became an accomplished writer and our businesses bloomed.

8 years after Hanna's fifth birthday, Rikki is pregnant again, this time with a son, luckily since the twins were leaving the house for their own adventures, it opened up two of the rooms. Giving our new son, Christopher, James' old room.

We were both happy when James chose to forgo keeping his tail in favor of staying with his family. I think it had something to do with the twin thing. Maria and James were always inseparable and if he had kept his tail that would be quite the separation. We hope that Chris will follow his brother's example, but only time will tell.

I was surprised when Rikki got pregnant again three years later, but once again it worked out well. The twins, both girls this time, could share a room for a couple years until Hanna would eventually move.

Everything worked out perfectly, we never had to move and we have a happy lovely family.

I smile as I see Maria and James, 23, making sand castles, since James doesn't like being in the water as much anymore. I see Hanna, 20, swimming with Chris, 7, he's still learning the difference between the ocean and our pool. I then look back to our four year old girls, Spencer and Michelle playing on the edge of the water between Rikki and James and Maria. I can't believe how much our family has grown, but we're happy, and we always will be. Our new beginning all those years ago was worth it.

****No POV****

All of the girls gathered their families at Mako Island every year to celebrate their friendship and their mermaidness.

Rikki Bennett lays on the beach with her red tail shinning in the sunlight. Next to her lays her cousin and best friend, Emma Dove,

with her shinning blue tail, on the other side of Rikki lay Bella Benjamin, a green tail in tow, and on the other side of Emma, lay Cleo McCartney with a lovely purple tail.

Gazing out at the ocean where their children swim, Rikki says, "I'm glad that we're still friends."

"Me too," Emma agrees.

"Me Three," Bella chimes in.

"And I'm glad that we gather every year to celebrate our anniversary," Cleo says.

The other three nod, and Rikki raises her glass, and says, "Happy Anniversary may there be many more."

"Cheers to that."

****The End****

****A/N : I did it guys! I can't believe that I finally finished. It's taken me so much longer than I planned. After multiple rewrites and lost writings after moving from high school to college to another college. Changing cities and living on my own. To internships and jobs, to all the tests and homework that took me away, I finally made it.****

****I just want to say that I appreciate you (the readers) for following me along the way. Whether it was from the first chapter of Time for Control or joined as of last chapter, I'm glad you did.

****I hope it was worth it for you.****

****Thank you to Chinaluv and Zikki3, you've both helped me just by telling me that you're still reading.****

****Bye guys and girls!****

End
file.